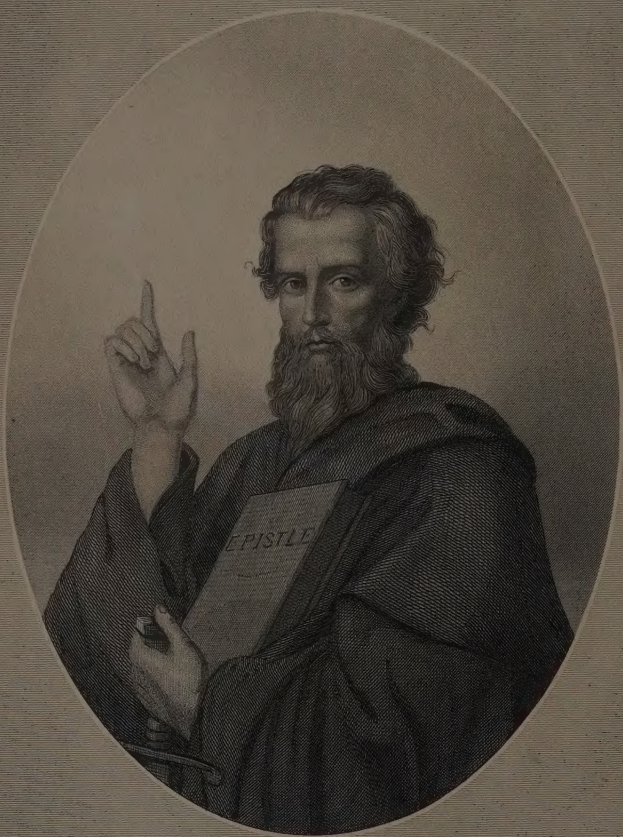


Lives of Saints



Rev. F. X. Weninger

Mrs. B. Fox, 1885
Walnut Hills



Saint Paul.

LIVES OF THE SAINTS,

WITH A

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION

ON THE

LIFE OF EACH SAINT,

FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

BY

REV F. X. WENINGER D.D., S.J.

VOL 1.

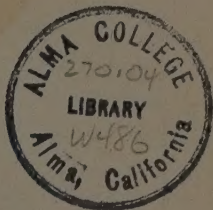
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NEW YORK:

P. O'SHEA, PUBLISHER,

37 BARCLAY STREET AND 42 PARK PLACE.

1877



24974

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

DURING the twenty-seven years of my missionary labors in the United States, I have published a series of books of Religious Instruction, with a view of placing within easy reach all the information which a Catholic should possess to enable him "to give a reason for the Faith that is in him," and to defend it against its opponents; as well as to contribute, by his example, to the progress of the Church in this part of the world. These books are :

CATHOLICITY, PROTESTANTISM AND INFIDELITY ;
THE MANUAL OF THE CATHOLIC DOCTRINE ;
THE SACRED HEART MISSION BOOK ;
THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPE ;
EASTER IN HEAVEN ;
PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWS, AND
THREE CATECHISMS.

But, as the proverb says and experience proves : *Verba movent, exempla trahunt* : *Words may move—but examples draw*. Accordingly I have thought it proper to publish a select series of "THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS," having in view principally the practical effect which these lives should have on the life of the Reader.

To secure this most desirable result, these pages will not give a bare recital of the actions of each Saint only, but will also point out the easiest way to follow his example and to copy his virtues in our own lives. A brief practical instruction will therefore be added to each life, so written that, in the two volumes, of which the entire

series will be composed, the Reader will have a clear and precise treatise of what may be called popular Theology, both dogmatic and moral, running hand in hand with the account of the heroic actions of the Saints of God, which are the best commentary and illustration of the doctrine contained in the Instructions.

These Lives of the Saints were published by me in German many years ago. I now place them before the public in an English translation, in the hope that they will, with God's blessing and the intercession of His Saints, contribute to the sanctification of their pious Readers.

INTRODUCTION.

IF the usefulness of a book is the true standard of its merit, then, surely, no works are more worthy of being published and read than those which relate the wonders of God in His Saints, and teach us how we may, in our own measure, imitate them and follow their footsteps. We have the testimony of all ages in favor of such writings, and of the numberless and inestimable benefits derived from their perusal. By them the Faithful have been wonderfully strengthened in their holy Faith; sinners have been converted to repentance; the lukewarm excited to fervor; dejected and timid souls have been encouraged; the sick and afflicted consoled; the despairing restored to hope. But nothing proves the usefulness of the Lives of the Saints more forcibly than the fact, that not a few of the Saints themselves, who now adorn the annals of the Church, owe their sanctity to the reading of the lives of other Saints who had preceded them. Those glowing pages have warmed many a heart, besides that of St. Augustine, with the encouraging thought which they suggested: "Why should not you be able to do what so many others have done?" The grace of God made use of those channels to pour itself into the souls of the readers—that all-powerful grace by which "God can raise up, even out of stones, children to Abraham."

It was, no doubt, for the purpose of producing such effects, that many of the Holy Fathers introduced the lives of the Saints into their writings, as we find in the works of St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Ambrose, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom, St. John of Damascus, St. Bernard, and others. For the same reason, from the earliest days of Christianity, skill-

ful and zealous writers were appointed by the Popes and the Bishops to record the acts of the Saints and Martyrs, their glorious confession of the Faith, their victories over their persecutors, their torments, their death, and the wonders which the Almighty wrought in them and through their intercession. These authentic relations were then read in the assemblies of the faithful, for their edification and encouragement.

Let it not be objected that our great model is Jesus Christ alone, and our great duty as Christians is to be made conformable unto Him." It is for this very purpose that we study the Lives of the Saints, who have accomplished that task to perfection, and we learn from their successful efforts, though they were but frail mortals like ourselves, how we too may ascend to the heights of the sanctity proposed to us. Does not St. Paul say to all: "Be ye therefore followers of me, as I also am of Christ?" (I. Cor. iv. 16.) And does he not also say, referring to the examples and miracles of the Saints of whom he was speaking: "Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation?" (Hebr. xiii. 7.)

Since then the efficacy of these writings is so great we need not wonder at the efforts made by the enemy of God and man to weaken or destroy our regard and veneration for them. The Lives of the Saints are made to pass for "pious fictions," the fruit of Oriental imaginations. We are told that it is folly to give credit to what has been written of the Saints. For, how could even strong men, to say nothing of delicate women and children, undergo such tortures without a murmur or a complaint, or a sign of suffering? That they should command the elements and reverse the "immutable laws" of nature? That they should converse in the flesh with Angelic Spirits, or with God himself, face to face? That they should be ravished in ecstasies and raised to the very heavens? And to confirm their scoffing incredulity and to shake our faith more effectually, the malignant critics seize upon the slightest error in names, dates, and other circumstances, as a sufficient reason for branding the entire history as a fiction or a forgery; and crying out against the Catholic Church, which, they say, compels its members to believe such

silly tales as Divine Revelations. They forget, first of all, that the acts of the Saints have no other basis than that of any other historical narrative, the human testimony of the witnesses, and that no one is ever required to receive even the best authenticated fact in these acts on the authority of divine faith. You may reject them all, if you will ; and therefore be an unreasonable man, but not a heretic in the eyes of the Church.

But let us open the Sacred Scriptures, which even our opponents, for the most part, receive as divinely inspired, and therefore to be believed on divine faith. We shall find in them the same miracles and the same assurance, from the mouth of God himself, that the Saints would work such wonders as we read in their lives. Thus, if the Martyrs rejoiced in their torments, we have the "Apostles rejoicing after they had been scourged, because they had been deemed worthy to suffer for the Name of Jesus." (Acts, v. 41.) If the Saints felt not the fire and the sword of their persecutors, we read of the three youths in the furnace of Babylon, walking unhurt amid the flames and singing the praises of God, in company with a fourth person, who must have been an angel of the Lord. (Dan. iii. 49.) The beasts respecting the holy combatants in the Roman amphitheatre, do no more than the lions had done to which Daniel was thrown to be devoured. (Dan. vi. 14.) The ravens fed Elias in the desert, (3 Kings 17,) as they fed Paul in his solitude. Is there anything more strange in the birds and fishes listening to the words of St. Francis, than the speaking of Balaam's ass, to its master? (Num. 22.) Did not Angels speak to Moses, Saul, Ananias, and Peter? Are there any wonders related in the Lives of the Saints greater than those which Moses wrought in Egypt, or Josue in his battle against the Amorrites? (Jos. x.) Surely it is of divine faith that St. Paul was raised to the "third heaven;" (2 Cor. xii,) and that the dead rose to life on touching the sacred bones of the Prophet; (4 Kings, xiii.) that the sick were healed when the shadow of the Apostle was cast on them as he walked through the streets of Jerusalem. (Acts v.) Are we to believe that the hand of the Lord is shortened, His power and dominion diminished? Did not our Divine Lord Himself

declare and foretell that His followers would work such miracles as He wrought, and even greater than these? (Jno. xiv. 12.) Either Christ did not speak the truth, or His Saints must have done such things as we read in their lives. But His words can neither be doubted nor explained away; therefore, our conclusion is proof against all cavil.

These reflections should encourage us to read the Lives of the Saints, who are our forefathers in the faith, and whose heroic deeds should fill our hearts with a holy emulation of their excellence. We shall thus also learn to rejoice at our being the children of that Church which alone is the mother of Saints, and to thank God for making us their brethren.

And as the Saints are witnesses to the Catholic Church, so are they also one of the strongest arguments against the modern sects which pretend to have reformed her and purified her of errors and corruption. St. Paul expressly bids Christians to "consider the conversation of the Saints and to follow their faith." But where will you find a Saint in all the three centuries of Protestantism? There is not one, in any of the many sects, whose sanctity God has approved by miracles. If they were what they claim to be, the pure, original Christian Church, the Holy Church; if they enjoyed in truth the communion of the Saints which they profess, there would be more evidence of the divine life in them. Thé sects are barren; there is no fruit on them. Therefore, they are not the true Church; they have not the faith which sanctifies, nor the grace and charity which unite souls to God.

They tell us that the Catholic Church degenerated from its primitive purity and became corrupt; so that God rejected her and raised up Protestantism to restore His truth and worship. If this were true, would it not follow that a corrupted faith could not produce sanctity in its followers? That a Church, rejected by the Spirit of God, could not be the fruitful mother of Saints? "By their fruits ye shall know them," says our Lord. (Matt. vii. 20.) Now in the Catholic Church we find Saints in all ages, down to our own days; and Saints whose merits God approved by numberless and astounding miracles. At the very time of

the boasted Reformation, when men accused her of having strayed so far that she was forever abandoned by the spirit of truth, we behold her adorned by a brilliant array of heroic men and women, whose lives must ever be an honor to our race and a triumphant answer to the slanders of her enemies. There is hardly an epoch, in the entire history of the Church, more fertile in illustrious Saints, than that in which Luther raised the standard of revolt, to the cry of corruption in doctrine and morals. Luther was born in the year 1483, he died in 1546. Now look at the Saints who flourished in those two centuries, many of them coeval with Luther :

	BORN.	DIED.
St. Francis of Paula.....	1438.....	1507
St. Catherine of Genoa.....	1447.....	1510
St. Casimir.....	1458.....	1484
St. Cajetan.....	1487.....	1547
St. Thomas of Villanova.....	1488.....	1555
St. Ignatius Loyola.....	1491.....	1556
St. John of God.....	1495.....	1550
St. Francis Xavier.....	1497.....	1552
St. Peter of Alcantara.....	1499.....	1562
St. Pius V.....	1504.....	1572
St. Francis Borgia.....	1510.....	1572
St. Philip Neri.....	1515.....	1595
St. Felix of Cantalizio.....	1515.....	1582
St. Teresa.....	1515.....	1582
St. Andrew Avellino.....	1520.....	1608
St. Catherine de Ricci.....	1522.....	1589
St. Louis Bertrand.....	1526.....	1581
St. Charles Borromeo.....	1538.....	1590
St. Paschal Baylon.....	1540.....	1592
St. John of the Cross.....	1542.....	1591
St. Francis Solano.....	1549.....	1610
St. Stanislaus Kostka.....	1550.....	1568
St. Camillus de Lellis.....	1550.....	1611
St. Joseph of Leonissa.....	1556.....	1612
St. Magdalen de Pazzi.....	1566.....	1607
St. Francis of Sales.....	1567.....	1622
St. Aloysius Gonzaga.....	1568.....	1591
St. Vincent of Paul.....	1575.....	1660
St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen.....	1577.....	1622
St. Rose of Lima.....	1586.....	1617
St. Francis Regis.....	1597.....	1640

These are the fruits of that tree, which, Luther declared to the world, was blighted by the wrath of heaven, and corrupted to its very core. And we might continue the catalogue down to the present century, adding to it the names of those who have illustrated the Church and the world by the splendor of their virtues. Can Protestantism show us a similar array? Where are the men and the women in its ranks, whose lives were a perfect fulfilment of what the Gospel teaches? Whose sanctity and truth had the seal of God's power to attest their divine origin? Whose actions were scrutinized as were those of the Catholic Saints in the processes of Beatification, and were able to stand the scrutiny? Oh! speak not of sanctity in the same breath with a religion which had Luther, Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth for its apostles; but rather draw from what has been said the conclusion, that if you wish to be ranked among the Saints in heaven, you must imitate them on earth, believing as they believed, and living as they lived.

All of them were the children of the Catholic Church, obedient to her voice and professing to believe whatever she taught. They all believed in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and either assisted at it or celebrated it devoutly every day, since most of them were priests, bishops or Popes. They believed in the Sacrament of Penance, and confessed their faults and sins to the priests of the Church. They offered prayers and sacrifices for the souls in Purgatory; they invoked the Saints of heaven; they put no bounds to their veneration and love for the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Many of them were members or founders of Religious Orders. All of them regarded the Pope as the Vicar of Christ on earth the Infallible Teacher of the Church in faith and morals. In a word, they were Catholics, not Protestants. Therefore, the Catholic Church is the true Church, since she is the Mother of the Saints; and they who would, one day, be members of the triumphant Church in heaven, must be, in this life, members of the Catholic Church, in which alone the Saints fought their good fight and won their immortal crowns.

A word has yet to be added for the practical use to be made of this work in Catholic families. To make the Lives of the Saints productive of the surest and most abundant fruit, let them be read aloud in the family circle, every evening. No more useful manner can be thought of for spending a portion of the long winter evenings at home, either in cities or in the country. For this purpose, these lives are written concisely, so that the reading of one of them, with the practical reflections annexed to it, will occupy little more than twenty minutes. In this manner we may be said to converse daily with the great Saints who have gone before us ; and therefore learn to imitate them. The sweet perfume of their virtues will constantly refresh and encourage us ; many idle words, and perhaps sinful conversations, will be prevented, as well as the loss of time ; and the whole family will gradually adopt the maxims of the Saints, be imbued with their spirit, practise their virtues, and by zeal and fidelity to duty, deserve a similar reward, peace of heart here and a crown of glory in heaven. May the Queen of the Saints and Mother of all the children of God, bless this book and its Readers.

1. The first part of the paper
deals with the general theory of
the subject. It is a very
interesting and important
contribution to the literature.

2. The second part of the paper
deals with the application of the
theory to the case of the
subject. It is a very
interesting and important
contribution to the literature.

LIVES OF THE SAINTS.

FIRST DAY OF JANUARY.

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, is the Saint of Saints, the source and origin of all sanctity. To Him, in preference to all other Saints, the first day of the year is appropriated and consecrated by the Catholic Church, which to-day presents us with a mystery of His life, a mystery, to use the words of St. Bernard, calling forth our admiration, our love and our imitation. This mystery is no other than His affectionate, yet painful Circumcision. The Evangelist thus speaks of the event. "And after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel, before He was conceived in the womb." (Luke ii. 21.) To understand these words well, we should bear in mind that the Lord Himself, in the Old Law, prescribed Circumcision, and enjoined its practice not only on the Patriarch Abraham, but also on all his descendants. It was to be a sign of the covenant which God made with Abraham and his posterity, a seal or confirmation of the promise which He gave them, a mark by which the people of God should be distinguished from unbelievers, in fine, a means by which the circumcised person received a pledge of his vocation to the kingdom of God.

Now it is certain that Christ, our Lord, as we gather from the holy Fathers and the Doctors of the Church, was not bound to compliance with this regulation, because, unlike the rest of the children of Abraham, He was not conceived by human operation, but by the power of the Holy Ghost took flesh in the virginal womb of Mary, who bore Him into the world without losing her virginity. The new-born Saviour wished,

however, to undergo this painful ordeal for many reasons, of which the following, among others, are given by the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas of Aquin. In the first place, He wished to show that He had assumed real human flesh, which was in truth as sensible to pain as all human flesh is, and was not so merely in appearance, as certain heretics afterwards maintained. Secondly, He was loathe to give the Jews any plausible reason for refusing to recognize in Him the true Messiah, on the pretext that He was not of the race of Abraham, from whose seed the Messiah should, according to the Divine promise, spring; nor would He give them any grounds for accusing Him of despising the Law, which God Himself had framed. Thirdly, His Circumcision would be a proof of His boundless love for us and of His ardent desire, enkindled by this unexampled love, to suffer for our salvation. Through love for us He became Man in the chaste womb of Mary. Through love for us He was born in a lowly stable during the inclement season of winter. Through love for us He received in His Circumcision to-day a painful wound, and shed His sacred Blood for the first time. This act was to be a pledge and security of the entire sacrifice of His blood, which He was to make in the fulness of His years, and to present to His Heavenly Father, from the wood of the hallowed Cross. The eagerness of our Infant Saviour to suffer for us is so intense, that, says St. Bernard, He not only anticipates the hour of that bloody sacrifice, which in His eternal designs was to be consummated in the fulness of life, but its first dawn too must be tintured with blood. In fine, our Divine Saviour submits to the law of Circumcision, to give us an example of the virtues which we most need, especially of a profound humility, indomitable patience, and perfect obedience. He is humble, because He lowers Himself to the condition not merely of a slave, but of an abject sinner. He is patient, because He freely subjects His innocent, tender flesh to unspeakable pain; He is obedient, because He blindly submits to the law of Circumcision, which His Father had given to His people, though it was not binding on Him as it was on other men. These and other essential virtues are exemplified in the Circumcision of our most loving Saviour. His example is now that forcible exhortation to be couched in express terms at a later date—
 ‘Learn of Me. I have given you an example that as I have done to you so you do also.’ (John xiii. 15.) Learn how you should humble yourself beneath the hand of God and of man, patiently submit to opposition and to misfortune, and obey the Law of God, under pain of losing a blissful eternity. Happy they who listen to this call of our Divine Master and fashion

their lives in this mould! So much we wished to say on the Circumcision itself and on its causes.

The place where the ceremony took place was, as St. Epiphanius and other holy Doctors teach, no other than Bethlehem, the scene of Christ's birth. The time was the eighth day after His birth, so fruitful of blessings, as the words of the Gospel, quoted above, explicitly affirm. We are left in uncertainty as to the minister of the ceremony. We know from the sacred text that a priest was not necessary, for we read that Abraham, though not a lawfully constituted priest, circumcised his son Ismael and the rest of his household. Many writers hold that St. Joseph, his blessed guardian, circumcised the Divine Child. Others are of opinion that a priest or Levite was called in to the crib of our Lord, and, in accordance with the Divine ordinance, circumcised Him on the eighth day. But whoever was the minister, we are satisfied with the certainty that our Divine Saviour was circumcised on the eighth day.

In conformity with the Jewish practice a special name was given to the new-born Child on the day of His Circumcision. His Heavenly Father had previously chosen this name, and communicated it to the Virgin Mother and to St. Joseph through the ministry of an Angel, for Gabriel said to Mary: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus." (Luke i. 31.) The same or another Angel spoke to Joseph also: "She (Mary) shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus." (Matt. i. 21.) These words of the Angel give the reason for the imposition of this name, "For He shall save His people from their sins." (Ibid.) Jesus signifies *Redeemer, Sanctifier, Saviour*. Therefore as the advent of the only-begotten Son of God into this world was to redeem and sanctify mankind, He was given the name of Jesus. There were, it is true, under the old dispensation, several persons who had borne this same name, such as Jesus, the Jewish Captain and successor of Moses, a son of Sirach, and Josedeck the High-Priest. Others, among whom are Joseph, Gideon, and Samson, were called saviours, but to no man was this name so appropriate as to Christ, our Lord, for no other was a true saviour of the world, no other could loose one single man from his sins. Only Christ bears this name with justice and in truth, since none but He accomplished all that this glorious name denotes. He has through His bitter sorrows and ignominious death released the whole world from the bondage of sin.

St. Bernard, St. Bernardine of Sienna, St. Bonaventure and other holy men have written very much on this sacred name as well as on its excellence and power. Long before St. Paul had

done the same, expressly declaring that this name is above all other names, and that at its mention every knee in heaven, on earth and under the earth, should bend. The power of this sacred name is disclosed to us by the assurance of Christ Himself, that, if we ask anything in His name, the Father will give it to us. He foretells also the numberless stupendous wonders which the power of this name would work: "In my name they shall cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they shall take up any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark xvi. 17, 18.) The lives of the Apostles and of a countless number of Saints bear witness to this truth. It is well known that several great Saints cherished a special devotion towards this august Name and frequently invoked it with their lips, fully aware of the abundance of sweetness and consolation with which it replenishes the pious soul, and of its exceeding bitterness and terror to the scoffing infidel. St. Paul, of whom we have already spoken, introduces the word into his Epistles no less than three hundred times. The Apostles, as Holy Writ bears witness, rejoiced that they were able to suffer something for this sacred name. St. Stephen, while exposed to a shower of stones, called upon this name: "Lord Jesus," he cried, "receive my spirit." (Acts vii. 58.) May not this very circumstance have been the origin of the praiseworthy custom, which all truly pious Catholics have, of invoking this holy name with extraordinary frequency and devotion at the hour of death? But to profit by this invocation at that solemn moment, we should now guard against its baneful abuse, repeat it with due reverence, and frequently call upon it with sweet confidence. It is well known that those who belong to certain Confraternities will receive a plenary indulgence, if, at the hour of death, they invoke this sacred name with their lips, or, if this be not possible, at least in their hearts. This privilege is however to be understood for those only, who, by a sincere confession, or, should this be not feasible, by an act of perfect contrition, have been reinstated in grace, for as long as a man remains in enmity with God or under the dominion of mortal sin, the means proposed or any similar to it is insufficient to obtain his pardon.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Jesus Christ, your Redeemer and Saviour, through love for you lowers Himself to the condition of a sinner. He is not ashamed of being regarded as a sinner by men, though He is holiness itself. Why do you put yourself above others? Why do you wish to be reputed pious and virtuous by men, when you are in the eyes of God a sinner, and, perhaps, one steeped in the dregs of sin. Through love for you, Jesus patiently endures unspeakable pain in His guileless, tender flesh, and what is your endurance when your sinful flesh is made to endure some slight pain? Jesus obeys the Law, by which He was not bound, how do you keep the commandments of God and of His Church, which bind you under pain of even eternal punishment? Jesus hastens to give you a proof of His love; on the eighth day of His life He pours out His Blood through love for you. You have passed many days, months and years of your life, and what proof of your love have you given to Jesus Christ? How long will you defer this manifestation? Begin to-day with fixed resolves and the imitation of those virtues, which are embodied and vividly portrayed in the Circumcision of your Saviour. Conscious of your manifold sins, do not exalt yourself above others. Do not seek from men, but from God, the reputation of being virtuous and upright. Endure with patience the ills to which your corrupt flesh is heir, it deserves to suffer still more. Obey perfectly the Commandments of God and those of His Church, that, as St. Paul says, the sacred Blood of Christ, which He shed for

your sake, may be to your good: "He became to all that obey Him the cause of eternal salvation." (Hebr. v. 8.)

2. This day, sanctified by the first drops of Christ's precious Blood, is the first of the New Year. Your Saviour this day offers the first fruits of His untainted Blood to His Heavenly Father for your salvation. What will you do? At least sanctify and perfect the present day by the performance of pious works, and offer it to our Lord as the first fruits of this year. Offer Him at the same time the thrice-precious and most sacred Blood which your Jesus sheds for your sake, in thanks for the favor, granted to you in preference to thousands of others, of witnessing the beginning of the New Year. Pray with sentiments of true humility, that, assisted by the merits of this sacred Blood and by His powerful grace, you may diligently labor this year for nought but the increase of God's glory and the salvation of your soul. You are well aware that the Lord might have visited you with the stroke of death, while buried in your sins and on the verge of an eternity of pain, as He did to so many others during the year which has just come to a close. Your offences merited this visitation; but the God whom you have so frequently insulted,—mark this well, that God whom you have so often despised, out of sheer mercy lends you, in preference to multitudes of others, the present time to profit for the amendment of your life. Frequently reflect on this His tender compassion, and mindful of it, serve the God of mercy to the

best of your power. He is truly deserving of this service. Should you be so thankless as to offend anew this year so clement a Lord, you would render yourself the most abominable of creatures, and most deserving of hell-fire. How would a Cain or a Judas, both of whom are lost for eternity, act towards God, if He were to grant them the same time and opportunity for repentance that He has given you? Would it be possible for them even once again to offend so good a God? Would they ever be tepid or remiss in His service? You may yourself answer these questions, and reflect that you are for the future under the same obligations to God as a Cain or a Judas rescued from hell would be. You are even more indebted to Him than they, inasmuch as, says St. Chrysostom, it is a far greater favor not to have been damned in your sins than to be freed from the prison of hell after your condemnation.

3. To-day you enter upon a new year. You have lived to see its beginning, but will you live to see its close? This you do not know. For many, this year will be the last of their lives; will it be so for you? It may be your last as well as that of others, and what then? Many a one who is beginning this new year in high spirits and robust health, will, before its close, enter eternity; some will be in heaven, others in hell; where will you be? On earth, or in eternity? If in eternity, in what state? This is known to God only. Jeremiah, by the command of the Lord, forewarned a false prophet of his death in these words: "This year shalt thou die." (Jer. xxviii. 16.) Were the Lord God to make me the bearer of a similar message to you this very day, what would be the result? How would you dispose yourself? Would you not serve Him with all possible perfec-

tion, do real penance for your past sins, and carefully guard against the least offence or insult to His Divine Majesty, before whom you are so soon to appear, and from whom you are to hear a sentence irrevocable for all eternity? Do all this now, for though you are not certain that you will die this year, neither are you sure of its not coming to pass. Even if you should not die this year, you will certainly have no reason to repent having seriously served God, done penance, and guarded against sin. But if death come upon you, these facts will fill you with the sweetest consolation, and with the well-grounded hope of eternal happiness. But if you do not follow the directions which I have given, you will have greater reason to expect death this year than the prolongation of your life.

Call to mind the parable of the fig tree, which the Gospel mentions as having borne no fruit for three years. The lord of the vineyard at first ordered it to be cut down, but yielding to the solicitations of his gardener, he consented to its being allowed to stand one year longer, on the condition, that if at the end of that year it were without fruit, it should be removed without mercy. You are this tree. Many are the years that you have passed without bearing fruits worthy of penance, or accomplishing any good work. You have long since deserved to be cut down and cast into ever-burning fire. But God has saved you. He grants you more time. But should you now bear no fruit nor change your life, there is every reason to fear that an angered God will order you to be cut down this very year and to be thrown as fuel into the everlasting flames. If you wish to prevent this terrible punishment, begin to-day to live as I have proposed. Make a generous resolution, and God will be with you. Say with

- holy David: "And I said (I have firmly resolved), now have I begun, (now, even to-day.)" Ps. lxxvi. 2.*

* This being the first day of the month, consult the directions, which are given at the end of the considera-

tions for January, on the manner of spending the first day of each month. The lives of St. Fulgentius and St. Odilo, of whom the Roman Martyrology makes mention to-day, will be found by the reader under the heading, *Eighth Day of January.*

SECOND DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. MACARIUS OF ALEXANDRIA AND ST. MACARIUS OF EGYPT, MONKS.

Commemoration is made in the Roman Martyrology or Calendar of Saints for this month, of two monks, each of whom bore the name of Macarius. The Saint who is honored to-day, takes his surname from Alexandria, his birthplace. His parents, poor in earthly means but rich in the fear of God, reared him from tender infancy in the practice of virtue and in menial employments. In the thirtieth year of his age he entered the desert, and began his cloistered life with a rigorous fast, which he continued for seven years, living on nothing but raw herbs during the whole of that time. During Lent he took no food nor drink, except on Sundays. He then collected all his forces in order to wage a continual warfare against his evil inclinations, acquire an intense love for God, a profound humility, an invincible patience, and other Christian virtues. But persuaded that he was far from being perfect, he betook himself to the cell of St. Pachomius, and under the guidance of so experienced a master of spirituality made rapid progress in the science of the Saints. He left this retreat for the mountains of Nitria, that he might be more secluded from the world. But the Patriarch of Alexandria, having the highest opinion of his virtue and piety, recalled the servant of God; and that his sanctity might be of greater benefit to others, who were walking in the path of virtue, raised him to the priesthood. For in spite of the Saint's eagerness to withdraw altogether from the society of his fellow-mortals; numbers of men anxious to serve God with all perfection, pressed on in his footsteps.

Obedient to the inspiration of heaven, Macarius undertook the guidance of these souls, and led them to the highest perfection in everything connected with Christian virtue. But as his life was a reflex of these virtues, which he taught others, and proved a powerful incentive to the emulation of his disciples,

words fail to show to what sublime perfection he himself, as well as his followers, attained. There was nothing on which he so strongly insisted as the practice of prayer and of self-denial. In both of these exercises he was a striking example to all; for he was so given to prayer that he devoted to it not only several hours of the day but also the greater part of the night, without ever allowing himself the slightest deviation from this rule. One of his disciples, by name Palladius, was troubled by aridity in prayer, and wished to abandon it on account of the multitude of distractions and temptations with which the evil spirit assailed him. "No," said St. Macarius, when acquainted with his case, "prolong your prayer still more, and say to the wicked spirit, who by his temptations and allurements seeks for nothing else than its abridgment or utter abandonment, 'No, I shall not do so, if I cannot pray in quiet, I shall still persevere, and for Christ's sake defend the walls of my cell.'" Of his self-denial we have already spoken.

We cannot omit the mention of the zeal with which the holy man, in defence of the true Faith, pursued heretics, and of the renown which he gained in this struggle. He let slip no opportunity to expose the deceits of the Arian heresy, and, such was his reputation for holiness, that many of the heretics, chiefly Arians, returned to the fold of the true Church. To prevent any further losses to their ranks, several of the Arians called upon the Emperor Valens, who was very favorable to their cause, and carried their groundless complaints so far that he ordered Macarius to be driven from his solitude and exiled to a far distant island, inhabited by none but barbarians and unbelievers. But this infidel land offered a new field for the greater exaltation and extension of the Catholic doctrine, which the Arians hoped by the banishment of Macarius to enfeeble and crush. His exhortations, which breathed sweet unction and affection, the many miracles which the power of the Most High enabled him to work in this island, and the holiness of his life so captivated the inhabitants, that they all to a man abjured infidelity and heresy, and returned to the Catholic Faith. So unexpected a victory on the side of Truth was too much for the Arians; they again drove St. Macarius from the island into which he had first been banished through their evil machinations. He thereupon returned to the desert, where he soon ended his holy career by a happy death in the 99th year of his age.



The second of our Saints, Macarius, is commemorated by the Roman Martyrology, on the 15th day of this month, and bears the surname of "Egypt." When he was thirty years old, he gave himself up to a life of seclusion in the desert under the direction of the holy Abbot Antony, and such was his ardor in the ascent to perfection, that the Lord bestowed on him the gift of working miracles, not only in cases of sickness, but also in favor of the dead and to the discomfiture of the evil one. Only a few words sufficed to enable him to deliver the possessed. He freed a woman, by the mere sprinkling of Holy Water in her room, from an evil which the infernal spirit had brought on her; at the same time, however, he exacted from her a promise to be more regular in the reception of the Sacraments, for the fact of her not having for a long time entered a Church nor approached the Holy Table, could have been the only cause of her possession by the demon.

An inoffensive man was murdered in cold blood in the public street. A certain person was unjustly regarded as the murderer. Seeing that the people were meditating his apprehension, he fled for refuge to the cell of St. Macarius. The officers of justice pursued, and by main force dragged him from his retreat. The Saint bore witness to the innocence of the accused, but his words proved ineffectual. At last, placing all his trust in God, he repaired to the grave of the murdered man, called him by name, and commanded him to come forth and declare in public whether the accused were really the murderer. The dead man rose at once from his grave, and spoke in sepulchral tones: "No, this is not the man who murdered me." The judge and all the bystanders, struck with terror, released their innocent prisoner, but then begged St. Macarius to learn for them the name of the real murderer. But he answered, "It is enough for me that this man here is innocent; as regards the guilty person, whoever he be, I am not at all concerned." Another time he refuted a heretic, who denied the Resurrection of the Body, and refused to abide by the decision of the Church, by taking him to the grave of a person long buried, and then and there recalling the dead man to life.

The fame of these and many other miracles caused multitudes to have recourse to the holy servant of God for consolation and succor in their wants. But finding this concourse an obstacle to his spiritual exercises, he dug out a secret hole in the ground; into this he frequently descended to meditate quietly

on the Mysteries of Faith; for he several times avowed that he never experienced sweeter consolation than in prayer and meditation. He spent sixty years of laborious exercise in the desert, and offered them to the Lord in reparation for those which he had previously passed in the world, not indeed in a godless manner, but with some remissness in his duty towards God. His life, adorned with sanctity and replete with wonders, was brought to a happy termination at the age of 90.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Let it be your first care to treasure in your heart the beautiful lesson, which St. Macarius of Alexandria taught his disciple, who wished to desert prayer on account of the numberless distractions by which he was beset. The evil spirit, well aware of the necessity and advantages of prayer, as I shall have occasion to repeat elsewhere, seeks by every means, but especially by distracting images, to render it distasteful. But we must pay no attention to his suggestions, and fighting manfully give ourselves still more confidently to this exercise. But of this we shall speak more at length elsewhere. Now we shall select from the lives of both these saints the following points for reflection and imitation.

1. These two Saints abandoned the world with all the possessions which they had or might have gained, entered the desert, and there strenuously spent their lives up to the last moment in the practice of the greatest austerity. Why all this? I answer, because they were in earnest in the service of God, and the salvation of their souls. To serve Him and to be happy is the end and purpose which God had in view in our creation. There is not a single human being who has not been created for this end. God desires us to serve Him here below, and holds out to us the enjoyment

of a never-fading eternity of delights, as the reward of our services. He has, it is true, no need of us, but as St. John Chrysostom remarks: "He requires us to serve Him, that He, in His infinite goodness, may make us partakers of His goods, provided we be faithful and assiduous." He therefore promises an inestimable reward for insignificant and trivial services, and an unheard-of eternal resurrection for labors which are slight, and soon to end. Moreover He requires of us nothing that is impossible or too severe; for, as He Himself assures us, His yoke is sweet and His burden is light. Nay, to render this yoke still sweeter, and this burden lighter, He grants us abundant, and, if we be willing, superabundant grace and strength. It is true that the service of God sometimes seems oppressive; but what endurance, what pain is not required of many a servant attached to a temporal lord, to gain a mean, passing, and frequently insecure reward! How often, as experience shows, is not the promised stipend refused or curtailed to the most faithful servant? Why should not a servant of God resolve to put up with some trifling inconveniences, when he may securely expect an immeasurably great and endless reward? Reflect seriously on this point amid all the accidents and

afflictions of life, and they will dwindle into nothingness.

Do you not desire to serve with all your strength a Lord who is so mighty, and withal so generous and so merciful? You must have this desire if you wish to be happy. This is the end of your existence. Still you are not expected to abandon the world and bury yourself in solitude, as each of the Saints Macarius did. You can in your present condition, even, in the world, serve God and become happy, as I shall show you elsewhere. To-day make the firm resolution to serve God seriously and unremittingly. The reward, which He promises, is well worth your most strenuous endeavors in His service. Even were there no reward to be hoped for, God Himself is supremely worthy of your greatest services, on account of His infinite majesty. "To be a servant of God is the highest of honors," says St. Jerome, "and is the noblest of man's privileges."

2. The two Saints continually exercise themselves in good works and recommend the same to others. They do not leave their solitude, nor return to the world, an unmistakable sign that they serve God only and with alacrity. God has created you to serve Him, and Him only and unceasingly. There are some men, who want to serve God, the world, and the flesh at the same time, or God to-day, the world, the flesh, and the devil to-morrow, as they did of whom it is written. "These nations feared the Lord, but nevertheless served also their idols" (II. Kings xvii. 41), and

those, to whom the holy prophet Elias administered so severe a rebuke, because of their fluctuations now to this side, now to that, at one time appealing to the one true God, at another to the gods of Baal. But the former practice is vain, and the latter an abomination before God. "No man can serve two masters," says our Lord Himself (Matt. vi. 24), that is such masters that the commands of one are contrary to those of the other, that one wishes what the other forbids, or forbids what the other enjoins; such is the warfare between God and Satan or the world. It is really the height of mockery to wish to serve God to-day, and His enemies to-morrow. His express command is that we serve Him only and forever. "Fear the Lord," He says by the mouth of His prophet Samuel, "and serve Him in truth and with your whole heart." (I. Kings xii. 24.) And again, "Put away the strange gods from among you . . . and serve Him only." (I. Kings vii. 3.) "Depart not from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart." (I. Kings xii. 20.) God wants our whole heart, nor shall the devil, the world, or the flesh have any part in it. To Him only shall it be given, He only shall be served, from Him there shall be no departure, to Him alone earnest, sincere, and continual tribute shall be paid. He who does not comply with the wishes and injunctions of the Lord, far from expecting a reward, will have reason to fear eternal ruin. "Their heart is now divided, now they shall perish," says the Lord (Osee x. 2).

THIRD DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. GENEVIEVE, VIRGIN, AND ST. GENEVIEVE, COUNTESS PALATINE.

The Holy Virgin Genevieve, the fame of whose brilliant virtues and miracles fills the whole of France, was born near Paris in the year of our Lord, 422. The poverty of her parents, Severus and Gerontia, faded away before the rich treasures of virtue, which they had accumulated. Even in her childhood Genevieve was remarkable for her extraordinary love of retirement, her mature judgment, and her angelic piety. When St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, was visiting his flock, he saw the child standing beside her parents, and inspired by heaven addressed the latter: "Happy are you, who have brought into the world a child so beloved of God. Take all possible care of her education; for the Lord has chosen her as a special offering." The following day he spoke to little Genevieve herself, and warned her to despise all temporal goods, and to choose Jesus Christ for her bridegroom. Genevieve assured him that this was her fixed design and most ardent desire. The saintly Bishop then gave her a small cross to be worn around her neck, instead of every foolish trinket, and to serve as a constant reminder of her resolution. From that very moment Genevieve made constant progress in virtue, spoke little with men, cherished solitude, prayer, and menial employments, and sought the pleasure of none but God. She once earnestly begged permission of her mother to accompany her to divine service; the mother refused, and on the renewal of the request struck her on the face, but no sooner had she done so than she was smitten by the hand of God with blindness. She now acknowledged and bewailed her fault. Moved by compassion, her pious daughter betook herself to prayer, ran to a spring for water, and making the sign of the Cross washed her mother's eyes, to which sight was immediately restored. This was the first of St. Genevieve's miracles, to be followed by innumerable others.

In her fourteenth year she went with two other virgins to the Bishop and begged the favor of his blessing and of admittance into the cloister. The prayer of the holy virgin was granted; she was received among the nuns and bound herself by the vow of perpetual Chastity. After the death of her parents she was sent by her superioress to her godmother, at Paris. Here the Lord put her virtue to a very painful test, a

severe illness; but satisfied with the proof of patience and humility, with which she submitted to this trial, He restored her to perfect health and made her name famous for miracles. Attila, the relentless king of the Goths, had fallen upon France in all the torrent of his fury, and spread devastation in its fairest portions. The inhabitants of Paris, uncertain as to his tyrannical intentions against their city, were all bent on securing their safety by flight; but Genevieve, in the ardor of her patriotic zeal, counselled them to remain in the city, and by fasting, prayer and alms deeds, to have recourse to God, assuring them that He would protect their city. They followed her advice, Genevieve joined them in fasting and prayer, and the Almighty so disposed events that the tyrant turned his steps elsewhere without laying a hand on the city. The people justly attributed the protection of the city to the holy virgin. On another occasion, when the ghastly form of famine suddenly appeared hovering over this same devoted city, she relieved the suffering by an unhopèd-for exploit of love. She went on board a vessel, sailed out, and returned with eleven ships laden with provisions, which rescued multitudes from imminent starvation. Such miracles were of frequent occurrence.

On both these occasions her aid had been given to the community at large, but individuals also experienced the power of her intercession. Thus she drove the evil spirit from twelve possessed persons, restored the use of their limbs to the lame, sight to the blind; and life to an unbaptized child, who had been killed by being thrown into a well. There were also numberless instances of her intervention in favor of the sick. Our Good Lord had indeed imparted to His chaste spouse the gift of miracles in an extraordinary degree. The reason of this distinction was her holy life. Her baptismal robe from the cradle to the grave was untainted by the least sin, her virginal purity made her resemble angels rather than men; she surpassed many veteran solitaries in the rigor of her mortification; for, passing over many other instances, we know that from her fifteenth to her fiftieth year she tasted nothing but a little barley bread and beans, and those on Sundays and Thursdays only. On reaching the age of fifty she was commanded by the Bishop to mitigate her austerities; this relaxation, however, consisted in her partaking of a slight quantity of milk and fish; she never allowed herself to touch wine. Her heart so glowed with the love of God that she could scarcely ever look up to heaven without shedding tears. Her eagerness to enjoy the beatific vision of her Beloved drew from her warm tears of expectation. Nothing caused her more acute pain than the thought that the

good God, whom she loved above all things and ardently wished others to love, was insulted. This lamentable fact moved her to confine herself to a narrow cell from the Feast of the three holy kings to the 1st Thursday of Lent, and to spend the whole of that time in prayer, fasting, and other works of penance, that she might in some measure atone for the shameful excesses, by which so many mortals offend the God of Might during the carnival season, a festive period so fraught with heathenish practices, so unbecoming a Christian, and, as St. Charles Borromeo says, so unmistakable in its satanic origin. If indeed we inquire into its moving spirit, we must conclude that the saintly Cardinal spoke but the plain truth.

In her eightieth year the Lord prostrated His great servant with a severe stroke of sickness, a herald of her approaching death, for which she had so long sighed. She died, as she had lived, in the sweet odor of sanctity. The city of Paris, in grateful remembrance of her timely intercession with the Lord at the moment of danger, honors her as its spécial Patroness. King Clovis and his royal consort during their reign erected a magnificent Church over the grave of St. Genevieve. This holy virgin is usually represented bearing a palm branch and two keys in her right hand and a flaming torch in the left. The palm branch is emblematic of her unassailable purity; the keys are commemorative of the famous miracle which her prayers wrought at a time that she wished to obtain in person from King Childeric, who was outside the city, pardon for some persons who had been condemned to death. The gates had been closed by order of Childeric; but on the approach of the Saint they opened of their own accord in the sight of the entire guard, and gave her a free passage. The flaming torch denotes her lively Faith, in virtue of which she had performed so many wonderful deeds; she indeed often produced light in the midst of darkness without any other help. But enough in praise of St. Genevieve of Paris.



Several historians, both ascetic and secular, have made us acquainted with St. Genevieve, the wife of the Count Palatine Siegfried. For some years subsequent to her marriage she was barren, but by the help of the Mother of God her desires were at length gratified. Siegfried not knowing that she was pregnant, and obliged to leave for the seat of war, intrusted her to the care of one of his best friends, by name Golo, who, however,

was at heart a depraved wretch. The impudent knave carried his audacity so far as to make the most shameful proposals to the chaste and holy lady, Genevieve. She was shocked, and severely rebuked him, warning him never again to make the slightest allusion to so base a project. But Golo was not so easily to be diverted from his purpose; a few weeks later he handed her a forged letter, by which the pious Countess was informed of her husband's death in battle. The miscreant hoped to gain his end by means of this letter; but Genevieve maintained her virtue and her noble resolution. The impure love of the impious Golo was now changed into a deadly hatred, and an implacable thirst for revenge. As soon as he heard that Siegfried was on his return home, he hastened to meet him and with feigned sadness told him that Genevieve had violated her troth and had given birth to an illegitimate child.

Siegfried lent a willing ear to the slanderer, and without making any inquiries into the case, ordered some of his servants to take Genevieve and her child into the neighboring woods and to drown them in the river which ran close by; moreover, he required of them to show him on their return her tongue, which was to be cut out, as a proof of their compliance with his commands. The servants led the child and its innocent mother, who might justly be termed a Christian Susanna, into the woods, but did not carry out the remainder of the cruel programme, which Siegfried had dictated in the first paroxysm of rage. Obeying the kinder impulses of their hearts, they set her free, and returned to their lord with the tongue of a dog, and led him to believe that it was that of his drowned wife. The innocent Countess so pitilessly repudiated by her husband, cast herself into the arms of the just God, resigned herself to her fate and called upon Him to bear testimony to her innocence. After wandering through the woods for a long time she found a cave where she took up her abode. Here she spent six years and three months, living on roots and herbs and feeding her son with the milk of a goat, which the Lord daily sent to her cell. At the end of this time Count Siegfried happened to be hunting in these woods, and saw a goat fleeing from his hounds into the cave. He followed up the pursuit and found Genevieve with her child. Her long-continued fasts and innumerable sufferings had so disfigured her countenance as to baffle all his attempts at recognition. But from her answer to his eager inquiries concerning her family, the length of time she had lived in the cave, and her name, as well as from other signs, he concluded that she was his wife, whom he had so unjustly cast off.

No tongue can describe the pleasurable emotions which pervaded the Count's soul upon the discovery. He threw himself at her feet, humbly craved forgiveness, and amid the pomp and rejoicings which the circumstances afforded, conducted her and his son to his palace. The impious wretch Golo was condemned to atone for his detestable crimes by being drawn between oxen. The holy Countess survived her reinstatement in her rights but three months, which she passed in the same pious exercises which she had practised during her sojourn in the cave; her diet consisted of the same coarse fare, which had sustained her in her late abode. She never ceased extolling the Providence of God, who, as He had long before acted in the case of the chaste Susanna, frequently permits innocence to be tossed about for a time but never to be wholly engulfed. A beautiful death crowned a life already encircled by a halo of sanctity and godliness. Her body was buried beneath the same Church which the Count had, at her request, built in honor of the glorious Queen of Heaven, on the very spot where she had passed many lonely hours. Numerous miracles attest before men the holiness and the powerful intercession of St. Genevieve with the Lord.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

From the life of St. Genevieve, Virgin, we may learn that neither the rank nor the riches nor the worldly honors which men enjoy, but their virtue and piety, gain favor with God; even the world is forced to acknowledge the imperishable fame, which these two qualities beget. How humble soever be your pedigree, you may by virtue and piety ingratiate yourself more with the Lord of all, than if you were of royal or imperial blood, and appeared before the world loaded with honors and riches. The life of the Countess Genevieve teaches us that the innocent are subjected by Divine Providence to the strokes of the lying tongue, but never completely overwhelmed. It requires no little courage to withstand the pangs of slander, but have recourse to Him, in whom we should put all our trust. He knows when it will

be opportune to manifest your innocence to the world, and to give you full compensation.

One point more. Have you remarked what the holy Virgin Genevieve did during the Carnival? Read again, and you will agree that you, who yesterday pledged your entire, unceasing service to God, as the end and the aim of your existence require, should take no part with the foolish children of the world during that time; for they abandon the service of God, and far from serving Him without intermission, then present themselves as votaries before the shrines of the world, the flesh and the devil; or they divide their hearts and want to serve God and His enemies at the same time. You heard yesterday what such persons may expect. Beware of imitating them, of abandoning your God, and see that your

eagerness to serve Him increase in proportion at least to their offences.

2. The two Saints Genevieve live in perpetual innocence, never sin grievously, and spend their time in the unwearied practice of every good work, especially of prayer, fasting and various kinds of mortification. They bear all their crosses with unabated patience, the former a severe illness, the latter a ruinous slander and a disgraceful repudiation. Here you have in a small compass all that you have to do in the service of God, and the attainment of everlasting happiness:

First of all, shun sin, for only this can debar you forever from the heavenly mansions; he, who sins, refuses to serve God, and obeys the fiend of all abomination and wickedness. In the second place, exercise yourself strenuously and untiringly in good works, chiefly in prayer, in the mindfulness of God's presence, in listening to His sacred word, in the more frequent reception of the Sacraments, and the like practices. The life of St. Macarius of Egypt, which you read yesterday, showed

you that an easy avenue of access is yielded to satan by those who have no love for prayer, seldom enter a Church, and neglect frequent Communion. You should know also that the performance of good works is essential to a servant of God, and that their omission is productive of untold misery. In the third place, submit in the spirit of Christian patience to the trials and afflictions with which the Lord may visit you at any time. They attend us everywhere; patient suffering secures our passage into heaven; it is the way which Jesus Christ has pointed out to us by word and example. Never lose sight of these three counsels, and let their practice rejoice your heart; bestow all possible care on them, and they will be to you a means of discharging your prime duty, fidelity in the service of God, and of meriting that reward which He has promised to His servants. "He that will love life," says St. Peter, "let him decline from evil and do good" (I. Peter iii. 10); and St. Paul, "Patience is necessary for you, that doing the will of God you may receive the promise" (Hebr. x. 36).

FOURTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. TITUS, BISHOP OF CRETE, ST. GORDIUS, SOLDIER AND MARTYR.

Hagiographers tell us very little of the life, virtues, and memorable acts of St. Titus; but the facts recorded by St. Paul in his Epistles are sufficient to entitle him to our highest veneration. This holy Apostle calls Titus his brother, his son, his companion, and his fellow-laborer. He says, among other things, that he had confided to him the government of the See of Crete, and writes him a special Epistle, containing instructions for the proper discharge of his episcopal duties. All these testimonies are proof of the reputation for virtue and holiness

which the disciple enjoyed in the eyes of his great master. According to St. Chrysostom and many others, Titus was born of heathen parents at Corinth. Temperance, seclusion, and chastity, joined with the study of the liberal arts and of languages, formed the chief attractions of his youth. When St. Paul made Corinth the field of his operations in spreading the light of the Gospel, Titus was one of the first to acknowledge the truth of our heavenly doctrines, and to solicit the favor of Baptism at the hands of the Apostle. The latter duly appreciated the noble dispositions and the brilliant talents of the youth, and after grounding him in the tenets of our holy Faith joyfully conferred on him the desired grace.

Titus, not content with procuring this happiness for himself, longed to see all men enjoy the blissful knowledge of Jesus Christ. St. Paul, aware of his zeal, took him as his companion in his evangelical labors throughout all Asia, and soon consecrated him Bishop of Crete and the adjacent isles. Dalmatia was the next field of his apostolic labors. His fatigue and exertions in his visitation of so many countries, and especially during his sojourn at Corinth, for the conversion of the idolaters; the persecutions which he underwent, and the thousands of souls whom he rescued from the mazes of Paganism, are known to the living God only. His fixed determination to comply to the letter with all the instructions, which he had received from St. Paul for his conduct in his episcopal duties, was the groundwork of his sanctity.

There can be no doubt of the many miracles which rendered his evangelical career glorious, and proved to be beacons of salvation to numberless benighted unbelievers. The Corinthians possessed a very valuable statue of Diana, to which they refused to cease paying Divine honors. The holy Bishop betook himself to prayer, from which he soon rose, penetrated with new courage, and precipitated the statue from the pinnacle which it occupied, with such force that it was shattered into a thousand pieces; the blind worshippers immediately acknowledged their folly in adoring a being so powerless. Another day Titus happened to be passing before a stately pagan temple, built in honor of Jupiter by the Governor Secundus, in compliance with the imperial command. Obeying a heavenly injunction, the holy man cursed the temple, as Christ had cursed the barren fig-tree, and immediately, without receiving the least touch of human hand, it fell to the ground. These and many other miracles, wrought by St. Titus through power from on high, opened the eyes of the heathens to the truth of our holy Faith, which they embraced with every demonstration of joy.

The holy servant of God occupied the episcopal chair nearly thirty-eight years, during which his zeal for souls never abated. At the age of ninety-four he was called by the Lord to receive his crown of eternal glory. The ministers of God were angels, who appeared to him at the hour of his death, and invited him to enter into the possession of never-fading joys. After his death his countenance appeared to the bystanders lit up with a heavenly glow. St. Chrysostom attests his perseverance in virginity. His esteem for this precious virtue arose from a sense of its eminent dignity, and impelled him to recommend it to others.



To this brief sketch of the holy Bishop Titus, we shall add that of St. Gordius, Centurion. This Christian hero, born at Caesarea in Cappadocia, entered the military service, where he proved himself as virtuous as he was brave. His courage gained him the rank of a centurion, while his piety endeared him to God and to man. No one ever heard an oath, a blasphemy, a censure, and least of all, an immodest word proceeding from his mouth. He never tasted intoxicating liquors, and shunned gambling and other vices, which are common in the camp. He avoided, and, with the utmost caution, fled the shadow of licentiousness, and studiously strove to withdraw others from evil practices. But what redounded most to his praise was his generous struggle in defence of the Faith. An imperial edict had just been promulgated, proclaiming the punishment of death on all who would refuse to forsake the Christian Religion and to worship the gods of the empire. Numbers of Christians, who paid no attention to this order, were imprisoned and subjected to the most cruel torments: others, to escape the rack, sought refuge in the woods; of these latter was Gordius, who laid aside his military belt and cloak, and retiring to the desert there prepared himself by prayer, fasting, watching and other exercises of piety for the approaching struggle.

Shortly after, he left his retreat and immediately directed his steps to the circus, where the imperial governor with a great number of the people was intently gazing at a horse race, held in honor of the god, Mars. Gordius forced his way through the crowd into the middle of the arena, where he exclaimed aloud in the words of the Prophet Isaias: "They have sought me that before asked not for me, they have found me that sought me not" (Isaias lxxv. 1). His unexpected presence, and above all these strange words, took the masses by surprise. The

governor asked him who he was, whence he came, and why he used such language in such a place? Gordius made known his name, his lineage, and the office he had held, adding that he had come to show his disregard for the impious edict against the Christians, and to profess Jesus Christ publicly. The governor was enraged beyond control, and thundered out: "Here, executioners! The lash, the scorpion, the sword, the cross, wild beasts, here! beat, rack, burn the scoffer! he deserves more than one death." "Ah! this very thought is bitter to me," quietly answered the hero, "my inability to die for Christ more than once." Then raising his hands towards heaven, he exclaimed: "The Lord is my helper; I shall not fear the torments which men can invent." Next turning to the governor he anxiously inquired: "Why do you delay so long? Torment me as you wish; the greater my torments, the more glorious the crown which awaits me above."

The governor was ready to burst with anger, but overcoming himself he endeavored by promises and flattery to make him change his mind. His dissimulation was soon however unveiled, for when Gordius answered his caresses with a mere smile of contempt, he rushed upon the champion of Christ with his drawn sword. But he again relinquished his design at the request of several friends and kinsmen of the Saint, who promised to allure him into compliance with the Emperor's wishes. They used every artifice to accomplish their purpose, shed bitter tears, and begged him to forego the terrible fate which awaited him by denying the Faith: some of them advised him to deny Christ with his lips at least, whilst in his heart he might profess Him, with the assurance that He would be in no way offended. Fired with a holy ardor, Gordius answered these latter counsellors: "No, never shall the tongue, which I have received from Christ, deny its Maker; 'With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation'" (Rom. x. 10). With this answer he signed himself with the sacred emblem of redemption, and proceeded to the scene where the martyrdom was to be enacted, his face beaming with a holy joy and serenity. He was tortured in a variety of most cruel ways, and at length decapitated. St. Basil gives the details, which we have reproduced, in a panegyric of St. Gordius delivered in Caesarea, so that their authenticity cannot be questioned.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Titus led a life of continual virginity; St. Gordius avoids the least breath of impurity and endeavors to guard others from the infection. If you seriously desire to be eternally happy, cherish a tender love for holy purity and guard against its least violation; for there is no crime so hateful to the Lord, no act so baneful to men, as the breach of holy purity. Hell is actually filled with wretches who have given themselves up to habits of debauchery, while there are few who grieve and sincerely repent of their former levity. We have the testimony of the Holy Spirit in confirmation of our assertion, when he exhorts youth to fly the allurements of women, and to shun undue intimacy: "Her house inclineth unto death, and her paths to hell. None that go in unto her shall return again, neither shall they take hold of the paths of life." (Prov. ii. 18, 19). What prophetic words can be more appalling? Not one, who is enslaved to a life of debauchery, returns by the practice of serious, sincere penance to the path of salvation, unless the all-powerful Grace of God should fall upon his soul. Can you promise yourself that the Lord will thus act in your favor, if you do not immediately fly those occasions of evil, or if you are blindly led by your audacity to presume on the mercy of God.

II. St. Titus employed his tongue only for the instruction and enlightenment of unbelievers in our sacred truths: St. Gordius never defiled his with an oath, a blasphemy, or other word derisive of God. No immodest discourses

or songs, slanderous language, and, least of all, no denial of his Faith ever passed his lips; but a fearless profession of Christ, fervent exhortations to the heathens to issue forth from their blindness, the praise and exaltation of God form his only subjects. How have you employed your tongue? Alas! how seldom to God's glory and your neighbor's advantage! on the contrary, what deep wounds it has inflicted on His honor and others' interests! Call to mind the lies, slanders, oaths, immodest expressions, blasphemies, and other similar insults, of which your tongue is guilty. Were all these not offensive to God? Not to mention other excesses of the same stamp, bethink yourself of your shameless language or entertainments: have you used them without dishonoring God, and scandalizing or poisoning your neighbor's heart. Woe to you, should you appear this day before the tribunal of God to render an account of the transgressions of your tongue only! Could you stand the shock?—Examine yourself then while there is time, and check the wanderings of your tongue. Even granting that you need a special grace of God to compass this end, I warn you not to cease petitioning the Divine assistance with fervor and perseverance, and co-operating with the grace which you are offered. "All of us," says St. Augustine, "must labor to curb our tongues; but we should at the same time earnestly petition the Lord for grace." The same holy Doctor commenting on these words of St. James—"The tongue no man can tame," says: "If no man can of his

own power tame his tongue, he must beg the Lord to put it in check. Do with it as with animals, which we break: a horse, a lion, a camel, an ox, or an elephant will not become tame, unless put under the hand of man; so should we look to God to tame the man, that is, his tongue." In other words, no man has strength sufficient to bridle his tongue, and keep it under control; a special grace of God is necessary, and to obtain it fervent prayers must be addressed to the Lord. Do so immediately.

FIFTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. SIMEON STYLITES, HERMIT : ST. SYNCLETICA, VIRGIN.

The life of St. Simeon Stylites is one which calls for our admiration rather than our imitation. There is, however, no reason for calling in question the facts which we are to relate, since they rest on the testimony of men eminent for their sanctity, and, as eye-witnesses of these wonders, perfectly reliable. It was the design of God to show the world what a weak man may accomplish when he co-operates with grace from heaven, and to encourage us in the practice of penance instead of our customary tepidity, by placing before our eyes real penitential works, which made up the life of our Saint. St. Simeon was born A. D. 392, in Sisan, on the confines of Syria. He is surnamed Stylites because he passed many years of his life on the top of a pillar. His father being a shepherd, Simeon was obliged to pass his boyhood in the same humble occupation. At the age of thirteen he happened to hear in the church these words of the Gospel: "Blessed are they that mourn" (Matt. v. 5). On inquiring the meaning of these words from a venerable servant of God, he experienced during their exposition a lively interior impulse to shut himself up in solitude, that he might the more quietly weep for his sins, and thus secure his eternal happiness.

Though he never grievously offended God, he obeyed this interior voice, fled into a desert, where he spent seven days without taking any nourishment, but always praying and shedding tears of repentance. He then retired to a monastery governed by St. Heliodorus, whom he implored with tears to receive him as a disciple; his request was granted, and he passed ten years in the practice of unprecedented austerities. Among others, he girded his loins with a chain of twisted palm-branches,

which in ten days became so imbedded in his flesh, that they could be drawn out only by the application of sharp instruments. He left this monastery for a hermitage, where he dwelt three years in a low, narrow hut. Here, assisted by heaven, he passed forty days and nights without eating or drinking anything. This was his manner of spending the season of Lent for more than twenty-eight years, as we are assured by Theodoret, who was a witness of his austerities. At the end of three years Simeon repaired to the summit of a mountain, and there in the open air passed a long period; he had several columns erected, the first of which was four cubits high, the second twenty, and the last forty cubits, while the top of the pillar was only three feet in diameter, thus preventing him from lying down, and forcing him to stand or kneel. He spent more than forty years on these different pillars, without any covering or protection from the cold or the heat, from snow or rain. He took a little nourishment but once a week: he was at first occupied only in praying and singing canticles of praise to the Lord. But when so extraordinary a manner of life was heard of abroad, innumerable multitudes hastened to the spot from distant lands, and could hardly believe what their eyes beheld. They were of all classes and conditions, the opulent and the lowly, the spiritual and the worldly, believers, heretics, and infidels.

Simeon took occasion from this concourse to inspire his audience with a contempt for the world, with love of penance, and with the desire of unfading joys, while he did not neglect other truths of Faith. The unction of his discourses was rewarded with the conversion of numerous heretics and pagans to the bosom of the Church, and with the fervor which others manifested in practices of penance and in the reformation of their lives. The holy preacher gave to each one in particular instructions for his guidance in his peculiar calling. His general exhortation was to cast their eyes frequently to their heavenly home, and to remember their last end. His time was distributed as follows: he devoted the first hours of the day to prayer and meditation, then preached to the people, and listened to the complaints or requests which were made; this exercise of charity was followed by another exhortation, then prayer filled up the remainder of the twenty-four hours, of which very little was given to a wearisome repose.

Certain hermits looked with suspicion upon this mode of life as a snare laid by the evil spirit for his destruction. They held a council, in which they resolved to send two of their number to Simeon with orders to descend from his high position. Should he comply with this injunction, he should be allowed to keep

his place, but if he should not, he was to be taken down by force. They rightly judged that his obedience would clearly prove the heavenly origin of his practices, while disobedience would betray its evil author. The two delegates went and acquainted him with the wishes of the assembly, when Simeon, without uttering a single word of dissatisfaction, immediately asked for a ladder, on which to descend. The monks, delighted at this wonderful exhibition of prompt obedience, told him to keep his place on the pillar. God also gave signs of his approbation by imparting to him the gift of miracles, and that of prophecy. On the appearance of a rod in the heavens, he foretold a great drought, to be followed by famine and pestilence. Another time he predicted a destructive swarm of locusts. The event justified the prophecy in both cases. The Emperor Theodosius, who had recommended his cause to the holy monk's prayers, obtained through his intercession a splendid victory over the Persians. Many other similar wonders are recorded in his life. At length this holy servant, rendered illustrious by his works, was called by his heavenly Master to receive his reward. Fortified by the holy Viaticum, and absorbed in prayer, this wonderful Saint yielded his pure soul into the hands of its Creator. His holy remains were taken down from the pillar in presence of the Patriarch of Antioch, six bishops and a triumphant escort of imperial deputies, by whom they were conducted with great pomp to Antioch, operating along the route numerous miracles in favor of the sick and the suffering. Another monk, called Daniel, embraced the manner of life of which St. Simeon was the originator, and is therefore also surnamed Stylites. His feast is kept on the 11th of December.



On the same day commemoration is made of the holy virgin Syncletica, whose virtues and holiness have elicited the highest encomiums of the holy Fathers. She was born at Alexandria, of noble parents. From childhood she manifested her utter abhorrence of worldly vanities; she dispensed with all display and finery in dress, fled empty pleasures, and avoided all intercourse with the other sex. When she became marriageable, youths of noble and wealthy families sued for her hand and her heart; but she always assured them that none but God could ever gain her love and affection. In her presence no loose conversation was to be heard, with such a fear of her sharp rebuke or of her abrupt departure did she strike the speakers. After the death of her parents she sold their goods, distributed the money among

the poor, and retired with a blind sister to a vault, intended as the last resting-place of a near relative. Extreme poverty and extraordinary austerity were her chief characteristics in this abode, bread and water were her only sustenance, the bare ground her bed, prayer, reading, and spiritual conversations were her only pastimes. Several young girls, moved by so beautiful an example, called upon her and asked what they should do to become happy. She answered: "Why do you ask me? Ask our Divine Lord, who says: 'Thou shalt love the Lord and thy neighbor.'" She illustrated these two points of the Christian law with such clearness, that her hearers resolved to leave her no more, but to pass the rest of their days under her guidance. They purchased a new house with the money which they had taken with them, and formed it into a cloister. The new Religious elected Syncletica as their Superioress, an office which she held till the eightieth year of her age. Her life shone as a brilliant mirror of that practice of faithfully treading in the footsteps of our Divine Lord, which she so frequently recommended to her sisters.

Her Divine Spouse frequently tried her by the most painful maladies, among others by an abscess in the jaw. Her teeth ached both day and night, her mouth and cheeks were eaten away, her whole face was horribly disfigured. The stench which arose from this wound was so offensive that no one dared remain near her for any length of time, and she was consequently for the most part left in utter loneliness. Still not a word nor a sigh of dissatisfaction escaped her, nor did she ever desire any alleviation of her suffering. When a physician called to see her, she asked: "Why would you rob me of my treasure?" but on his assurance that he would apply no remedy for the evil, but merely remove the foul flesh, to prevent the attendants from growing faint, she was satisfied, and to suffer still more, allowed him to perform such painful operations as he thought proper. Spite of this and other afflictions she always appeared cheerful and resigned to the will of God. After having tried her virtue by tribulation as gold is tried by fire, her heavenly Spouse put an end to her sorrows and replaced them by manifold joys. Three days before her death He sent her a delegation of angels and holy virgins, who invited her to the heavenly Jerusalem, and promised to return for her spirit in three days' time. After receiving the last Sacraments with fervor and devotion, the holy virgin addressed her spiritual daughters: "Dearest sisters, be persevering in good works, and patient in afflictions; my pains have indeed been severe, but they are now at an end." The angelic choirs and bands of virgins soon appeared and bore

her chaste soul, adorned with so many virtues, to the throne of her heavenly Bridegroom, A. D. 350.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Simeon warned his hearers to look up to heaven and to be mindful of their last end. He himself practiced what he taught others, and drew from these considerations a strong motive for adopting the singular manner of life which we have seen him leading. St. Syncretica, amid all her pains and struggles, did not lose sight of the same means. Let both these Saints be your models. When you groan under the burden of your crosses and adverse fortunes, cast a look heavenwards, and let this glance incite you to patience and zeal in the service of God; while your gaze is riveted on the things above, make this reflection, "Shall I enter heaven or not? Shall I be eternally happy or miserable? Consider the terrible declaration of our heavenly Teacher, Jesus Christ, when He says that all men are created to be happy, but that few attain this bliss. "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. xx. 16). In another place He says, "Enter ye in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and strait is the way, that leadeth to life, and few there are who find it" (Matt. vii. 13, 14). Who is there that does not tremble on hearing these words of eternal Truth, the more so, as none of us knows whether we shall be numbered among the many reprobates, or among the few who will rejoice in unfading glory? Yet, dear reader, this uncertainty should not make us a prey to melancholy or low spirits; even in that state we shall derive

plentiful consolation from the following considerations: All men are created to be forever happy. God wishes all to be happy; all of us have it in our power to be happy; the Lord supplies all with abundant grace to secure their happiness; if a man do not become happy; if he be debarred from the portals of happiness, the fault rests with himself; if he make a proper use of the means which God has given him to insure his happiness, he will certainly become happy; few become so, because few make use of these means; many are for ever ruined, because they neglect these graces, yea, often run along in the opposite direction. After these considerations, resolve to be in the number not of the many, but of the few. Follow the directions which God has given you to attain your end. I pointed them out the day before yesterday. If you act in concert with His grace, you will certainly be happy, how small soever be the number of the elect. What reason have you to repine and grow disheartened? I do not disapprove of your entertaining a holy fear, which may assist you in the performance of what is necessary. Lay up as a treasure deep in your heart this salutary counsel of St. Chrysostom, "Live with the few, that you may be happy with the few." Or, "Be of the small number, if you wish to be one of those whose happiness is a certainty."

II. St. Syncretica is invited and, three days after, conducted by heavenly spirits to the regions of bliss,—a chaste virgin by pure beings. Have you ever read or

heard that a like honor has been ever bestowed on an impure man? Certainly not; for heaven is closed to the impure, and the angels withdraw in horror from their presence; unclean spirits are their only attendants. By whom will your soul be conducted into eternity? The proverb says, "Birds of a feather flock together." If you resemble the angels in purity, one of these undefiled creatures will be at your side, and your faithful companion at the last solemn hour. But if your soul be tarnished with the foul stains of the demon of impurity, woe to you! "Impurity gladdens the devil," says St. Bernardine; and St. Bernard, "Chastity makes angels of men;" and again, "The difference between a chaste mortal and an angel lies in the degree of virtue; the purity of the angel is more blissful, that of the mortal is more heroic."

SIXTH DAY OF JANUARY.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, OR FEAST OF THE THREE HOLY KINGS.

Three great events, which occurred on the same day, though not in the same year, are presented to us for serious meditation by our Holy Mother, the Church. The first is the Adoration of the Infant Jesus by three holy kings; the second is the Baptism of our Lord in the river Jordan; the third is the change of water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana, in Galilee. On each of these three occasions Jesus Christ manifested His Divinity to men; on the second, to St. John the Baptist and to a great multitude of the Jews, who heard the voice of the Father speaking from heaven, and saw the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove resting on the Son's head; on the third to His disciples, before whom He wrought His first miracle at Cana, as we have said, and whom, as Holy Writ testifies, He thus confirmed in their belief. The Feast of to-day, which is regarded and solemnized as one of the most glorious occurring in the Ecclesiastical year, is therefore called the Feast of our Lord's Epiphany, that is, a Feast on which is commemorated the manifestation of the Man-God to mortals. On account of His first manifestation, which was made to three wise men, who were Gentiles, it is specially called the Feast of the three holy kings; a few remarks on this event will not be out of place.

As soon as the only-begotten Son of God was brought forth by the Virgin Mary in the stable, He desired to make Himself known to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles. To the pious shepherds, who were Jews, and tended their flocks at night in the fields, He sent an angel to announce His birth. To the

Gentiles in the East, He sent a star, which they at once recognized as the star which the Prophet Balaam, as we read in the Book of Numbers, Chap. xxiv., had long before prophesied as indicating that a King was born in Judea, who should save the world. This is the interpretation and explanation given of the passage by the Fathers. The star, which made its first appearance in the East, was of far greater brilliancy than any other in the heavens, and God, who had sent it as an indication of His advent among men, so enlightened the minds of the three wise men, that they looked upon it as a sign of the coming of the Messias or King of the Jews, as had been foretold by Balaam. Tradition attributes to these wise men the rank of kings, though not the power and influence possessed by sovereigns of our day. Some authors, it is true, deny them the title; but the invariable opinion of the oldest Fathers and of all Christendom, cannot but be of greater weight with reasoning Christians, and remove all doubts as to the certainty of this fact; it is besides more in keeping with the prophecies of the sacred writer, who unequivocally declares that Christ, our Lord, would be adored by kings from Arabia, and receive from their hands testimonials of homage. These three kings, who are respectively called Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, set out in quest of the new-born sovereign immediately after the appearance of the star.

This star acted as their guide till they reached Jerusalem, when it disappeared from their sight. Their grief at this unexpected privation was by no means slight. But consoled by the reflection that in Jerusalem, the Metropolis of Judea, the birth place and dwelling of the new-born King must certainly be known, they unhesitatingly entered the city, and fearlessly asked, "Where is He, that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and are come to adore Him" (Matt. ii. 2). The inhabitants of the city were astonished at this inquiry, and knew not what answer to give. Meanwhile the news of these travellers' arrival and of their strange inquiries had spread through the city and reached the ears of King Herod. This ambitious and unscrupulous prince, fearing his deposition by the new-born Babe, called together a council of the priests and doctors of the Law, and inquired where the Messias was to be born. They all answered that, according to the Prophecy of Micheas, He was to be born in Bethlehem, a town of the tribe of Juda. Whereupon Herod ordered the three holy travellers into his presence, and eagerly listened to their account of the star's appearance, of which they had before spoken, and of the attending circumstances. He then dismissed them with these words: "Go, and diligently inquire after the Child, and when

you have found Him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore Him" (Matt. ii. 8). The real intention of the wily king was not to pay homage to the Divine Infant, but to establish himself more firmly on his throne, by secretly removing the Babe.

The information thus procured by the wise men filled them with consolation and encouraged them to renew their journey to Bethlehem. What added to their joy was the reappearance of their heavenly guide, the star, which they had seen first in the East; it came to view as soon as they had issued from the city, and was their constant guide as far as the birthplace of the heavenly Child. Their cup was now overflowing with delights, not to be described by human pen. Who can even imagine the depth of that sweetness which flooded their souls on beholding the spot where the Infant King, so long, so ardently sought, found a refuge! Several commentators are of opinion that St. Joseph rented a small, poor cottage, as soon as the crowds, which had swelled Bethlehem, began to grow less; while others believe that he continued with the Child and the Virgin Mother in the cave. The whole of Christendom, resting on the teachings of the Fathers, hold this latter opinion; especially as we are told by the Evangelist that the star ceased in its course directly over the cave. Their hearts bounding with joy and inflamed with one sole desire, the wise men entered beneath the lowly roof, and beheld the lovely Child sitting in the lap of His Holy Mother and meekly regarding them as they approached. A supernatural light at once penetrated their minds and clearly showed them that He, whom they saw, was really the mighty King, the only Son of the Father, come into the world to save men; they fell upon their knees, and bowing down, with reverential language acknowledged Him as their Lord and God, opened their purses and offered Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh; gold, in acknowledgment of His royalty, myrrh, in belief of His humanity, and frankincense as a testimonial of their faith in His Divinity. They thus verified the prophecy of the royal Psalmist: "The kings of Tharsus and the islands shall offer presents; the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts" (Ps. lxxi. 10). The Evangelist does not inform us as to the length of time spent by the wise men within these sacred precincts, the conversations which they held with Mary and Joseph, nor regarding the heavenly gifts and favors with which they were honored by the Infant King; we may, however, easily imagine how distressed they were at being obliged to tear themselves away from this holy family; what precious secrets they must have learned from

the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph concerning the Child, and what rich treasures of consolation must have been awarded them by their Infant Saviour in return for their heartfelt homage and generous offerings.

After they had plentifully quaffed at this sweet fount of devotion, they prepared to return home by way of Jerusalem, as Herod had enjoined. But an angel of the Lord appeared to them while they were asleep, and cautioned them not to revisit the treacherous king, but to return by another road. In obedience to this command they took another, but more wearisome way, and when they had reached their destination, propagated the news of our Lord's coming, and spent their lives in great holiness, wherefore they and their sacred relics have been held in great veneration by the Catholic Church.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. To-day we celebrate the birthday of Christianity, in commemoration of the vocation of the three heathen kings to the knowledge and profession of Jesus Christ. They are for this reason called the first-born of our Faith by the Fathers, and for the same reason you can do nothing more reasonable than solemnize this event with all possible devotion, and return ardent thanks to the Lord for the inestimable grace of vocation to the true Church. "It is a great, yea, a priceless favor granted me by my God," says St. Augustine, "to have been born at a time and among a people which enabled me to embrace the true Faith. How many thousands of men do I not see, who have been deprived of this grace!" Yes, thousands upon thousands of men still grope about in the darkness of paganism, infidelity, or heresy, and, by obstinately closing their eyes to the saving light of Catholic Doctrine, fall into the bottomless abyss, while the boundless mercy of God has shed the rays of His sun upon you, guided by which you will safely walk to your

goal! Oh! falter not in the way, but raise your mind and your heart to God in ceaseless praise and adoration; for the more precious the gift, the more grateful should you be to the donor.

II. The faith of the three kings is revealed by their works, by their lowly posture, their sincere adoration of the Infant Jesus as their God, their offerings of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and their announcement of the happiness they had received, to their subjects. He, who was the object of the honor tendered by these kings, is really present under the appearance of bread in our churches; should you not therefore give proof of the belief, which, I doubt not, you cherish, by outward acts? Cast yourself on your knees before your God, bow down in adoration, and tender Him the service of your body, and of all your faculties; beware of imitating those who dishonor their Christian name by their want of reverence in their deportment, their unbecoming postures, and their refusal to bend the knee before that God, while He offers

Himself for us, or permits us to gaze on His sacred humanity in the sacrament of love. Such conduct is highly detestable before God, and sadly proves that such persons either do not believe in His real presence, or believing fail to reflect that He is their Master, their Lord, and their Judge. Woe to such scoffers, especially at that hour, when they shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ, who will assuredly not leave unpunished the insults offered Him in the sacrament of His love. Their want of devotion and recollection in the House of God is moreover a clear proof of the numberless insults which they offer Him in other places.

III. About this time the carnival season is inaugurated in many countries. But why at this time? "Because," says St. Charles Borromeo, "the enemy of mankind wishes to engraft the sapling of paganism on the trunk of Christianity." For it is certain that the carnival was originally a pagan feast, instituted in honor of the god Bacchus and attended with the most shameful excesses. Satan adds all possible pomp to this festival, and revives it among Christians at this part of the year, so well calculated to remind us of the conversions of the heathen kings to the doctrines of Jesus Christ. The Fathers declare that a Christian, who takes part in these excesses forsakes, if not professedly, at least by his acts, the true Faith, and is borne away by the billows of Paganism. In fact, those who had taken part in the celebration of any heathen festival, were regarded by the early Church as apostates, and good Christians preferred death itself to any participation in such satanical excesses. But what is the case to-day? To-day no tyrant forces the Christian to such conduct by the

rack or the sword, and yet numbers freely enter the ranks and by their actions bid farewell to a Faith for which they are ever indebted to God! Sad to say, there is no festival of the year so pompous and so prolonged as that of the Carnival! What an inconceivable insult to God! How deplorable a crime! And, what is more lamentable, how few acknowledge any excesses in this solemnity! Is it possible, that after considering apostasy from the Faith, even when revealed only in the exterior conduct, as the greatest of evils, and as a crime worthy of eternal flames, any person can with cool deliberation regard this festival as harmless? What blindness!

What will you do? Will you cling firmly to the Bark of the Faith, or resign yourself to the whirlpool of Paganism? Will you continue faithful to Christ, or enrol yourself among the minions of Satan? Allow me to repeat to you the words of the Apostle, which St. Charles Borromeo used in warning the Milanese: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephes. v. 11). In another place he says: "Bear not the yoke with unbelievers, for what participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" (II. Cor. ii. 14, 15.) What has been said does not apply to those who properly solemnize and celebrate this festive season, but to those who enter heart and soul into the abominations which we have condemned, and give themselves up to pleasures, not in keeping with Christian ideas, but rather attendants of sin and debauchery, the heirloom of fallen

idolatry. How grateful should we not be to God, that our fair American soil has been less impregnated with this bane than Europe!	Woe to him, who should introduce these practices and by his evil example hurry so many souls into the abyss.
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SEVENTH DAY OF JANUARY:

THE STS. LUCIAN, MARTYRS.

Two Saints by the name of Lucian, are honored by the Church this month. One of these, whose sacred memory we recall to-day, was born in the city of Samosata, in Syria, of Christian parents, both of whom he lost when he was only twelve years old. Spite of his tender age he had already so grounded himself in Christian greatness of soul, that he divided all his inheritance among the poor, and placed himself under the guidance of the holy Abbot Macarius, to possess himself not only of the truths of Faith, but also of Christian perfection. The oral instructions of the Saintly Abbot, joined with the assiduous reading of the Sacred Volume and of the Fathers, supplied him with the means of assisting other Christians in their struggles, and still more with an antidote against the baneful doctrines of heresy. He did not, however, neglect himself: his whole conduct was a mirror of holiness, his great diligence, his prayers, prolonged far into the night, his single repast every day, his abstinence from meat and wine, his severity towards himself, his meekness towards others, and his moderation in speech, which caused him to hear or speak of nothing but God and other sacred subjects.

In the course of time he went to Antioch, where he was promoted to the dignity of the priesthood by the Bishop, who was charmed by his virtue and erudition. In this city he opened a school for the education of youth in the principles of Christian piety, as well as of human wisdom; for this service he desired no remuneration, having always only this object in view, viz., the formation of pious, fervent Christians and heroic defenders of the Faith, which his own numerous writings shielded against the assaults of the heretics. He lived on alms, which in turn he gave to the poor, as occasion offered. This generosity made him an object of honor and love to the Christians, and of bitter enmity to the pagans and heretics, besides causing his appre-

hension at Nicomedia by the Emperor Galerius Maximian, who was bent on the utter extermination of the Christian people. On his way to the court of the Emperor, he fell in with forty Christian soldiers, whom the fear of martyrdom had just caused to apostatize. He spoke to them so feelingly that they shed bitter tears of repentance for their fault, and sealed with their blood the Faith which they nobly defended. Farther on in the journey, his exhortations procured a similar grace for several persons who had denied Christ.

When he was taken before the tribunal of Maximian, the latter, having heard from different sources that Lucian could by a mere glance lead a pagan to confess Jesus Christ, would by no means look him in the face. Wherefore, causing a thin curtain to be drawn between himself and the confessor, he asked him who he was, whence he came, and what was his profession? To each question Lucian answered: "I am a Christian." The tyrant flew into a passion and menaced him with the most painful torments, if he would give him no other answer. But the martyr was undaunted and would yield in nothing to the tyrant, who at last, wearied beyond endurance, ordered him to be stretched on a rack, his members to be dislocated, and subjected to other tortures. The executioners mercilessly carried out the injunction to the letter, and among other torments laid him, covered with wounds, upon pieces of broken pottery, and left him in this position without any relief for fourteen days and nights, expecting that his strength would give way to pain and hunger. They several times presented him some food, which had been previously offered to the gods, but the intrepid sufferer, like the seven Macchabees of old, openly professed that he would die rather than taste the least morsel of such food. On the fifteenth day the Emperor sent a messenger to see if he were still alive, when the martyr said: "Go, tell the Emperor that I am a Christian." He repeated the same words a second time, and in the act expired. The tyrant ordered a large stone to be tied to the Saint's body, which was then thrown into the river; but several days afterwards the sacred remains were cast upon the strand, where they were found by the Christians, who gave them an honorable interment.



The second St. Lucian, who is mentioned in the Martyrology for Jan. 28, was a disciple of St. Peter, and the companion of St. Dennis during his evangelical career in France. His words so portrayed the ardor of his zeal, and were of such profit to his

hearers, that he brought many to the true Faith, and so strengthened them in their belief, that they joyfully submitted to the most grievous torments in its profession. The imperial prefect of Gaul, on receiving an account of his works, dispatched couriers to seek him and to put him to death should he refuse to abjure Christianity. As soon as the lictors had seized him with two of his disciples, they put the latter to death in his presence, and then asked him, whether he were the sorcerer who was seducing the people from the worship of the gods, and whether he were now ready to choose between death and the denial of Christ. "I am no sorcerer," answered the Saint, "but, as a servant of Jesus Christ, I show the people the true way to happiness. For the rest I have no fear of death: for Christ is my life, and death is my crown."

The soldiers, unwilling to give him a death so gentle as that of his disciples, made use of all kinds of tortures; but seeing that their efforts were lost on the martyr, they resolved on his decapitation. The holy man was full of joy at this announcement, knelt down, recommended his soul to God, and calmly received the stroke of death. At that very moment a dazzling light shone around his body and a voice from heaven was heard, saying: "Come, thou pious and faithful servant, receive the crown which has been so long awaiting thee." His sacred relics were entombed by the Christians with triumphal pomp, and afterwards deposited beneath a magnificent Church built in his honor.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. These two Saints continually labored for the conversion of unbelievers and the encouragement of the faithful. By this self-sacrifice they rescued many from the jaws of hell and directed them aright to their eternal home. Nowadays many persons, by using the most offensive language when speaking of the Christian Religion and of its doctrines, by turning the Commandments and Ceremonies of the Church to ridicule, by sneering and scoffing at devoutness, by despising and persecuting those who have had the courage to embrace the Truth, confirm Non-Catholics in their errors and weaken the

Faith of many a Catholic. Their interference may be justly charged with causing many of both professions to fall into the abyss. What a terrible account they shall have to give at the tribunal of supreme justice! Take care not to be of their number; speak at all times with true reverence of our holy Religion, of the Ceremonies and Commandments of the Church, and of the principles of Faith. Never sneer, jest, or laugh at spiritual persons: be not so foolish as to despise or persecute those who return to the right path. On the other hand, if you find an opportunity to bring an unbeliever to the

knowledge of truth, or a pusillanimous Catholic to his duty, by engaging in a friendly discussion, fail not to seize the occasion. Many a soul has been born to the true Faith in this way through the zeal of a fervent Catholic even of a secular calling.

II. The two Saints spend their time in prayer, in the instruction of their neighbor, in the propagation of God's word, and in other pious works. How have you been engaged from the beginning of this year up to this moment? Many persons were carried off by death before the opening of this month. What then should be your gratitude to God for so unspeakable a favor? Should you fail to devote the moments so generously lent you to the service of God and the performance of good works, you would justly incur the wrath of the Lord. Tell me, what would be the employment of a soul, damned last year, had it but one single hour of those

you have received? That hour would be sufficient to redeem her from prison and to place her in the possession of a heavenly kingdom. And how would she pass several hours or days, granted her for repentance? I leave the answer to you, merely adding that you have reason to do now, what she would do now under such circumstances. You rendered yourself guilty last year of squandering your time, and endangered your soul's salvation. You lost a great deal of time by not employing it for the end which God had in view when He lent it to you: but now you must strive to purchase it anew, as the Apostle warns you in his Epistle to the Ephesians, chap. ii. "The time, which a man spends in sin, is lost," says St. Thomas. "But how may it be recovered? Shall I answer? By a renewed application to good works." "Wait not for the night, for then time is no more."

EIGHTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. FULGENTIUS, BISHOP OF RUSPA: ST. ODILO, ABBOT.

St. Fulgentius, the valiant champion of Catholic truth, was born in the far-famed city of Carthage, of parents illustrious for their piety no less than for their position in society. He conceived, in his youth, so deep an aversion for the world and for transitory things, whose nothingness the Lord enabled him to penetrate, that he resolved to flee these gewgaws, and to study the sweets of religious perfection in the wilds of the desert. To dispose his heart for this grace, he in the mean time carefully shunned idle gossip, theatrical displays, and other sensual pastimes, and drew near, with a sweet attraction, to the recesses of retirement, prayer, study, and spiritual reading. As soon as he had reached the age required for entrance into the cloister, he laid aside his earthly possessions, and casting himself

at the feet of St. Faustus, a Bishop, who was the Abbot of a certain monastery, begged him to receive him as one of his spiritual children. His request was granted; whereupon he applied himself with such earnestness to the practice of perfection, as to serve in a short time for a model of virtue to his brethren. Self-conquest was his chief aim and untiring practice; he could never be induced to prefer one kind of food to another on account of its flavor, nor would he pay the slightest attention to anything, which would give pleasure or comfort to the animal man. The pleasures of seclusion did not however last long; for the violent persecution waged against the Christians by the Vandal King, Thrasimund, forced him to flee in company of the Bishop from the monastery.

He returned a few years after, was ordained priest, and subsequently raised to the See of the populous city of Ruspa. In this office, which he had accepted only through obedience and his desire to shield the Christians, who were sorely pressed by the Arians, he neither changed his coarse monastic habit nor relaxed the rigor with which he had treated himself when a simple monk. His efforts to guard the Faith from the attacks of the heretics, and his eloquent appeals to his flock to stand firm, were unceasing. His zeal at length so incensed Thrasimund that this tyrant banished him with several other Bishops to Sardinia. Nothing pained the saintly pastor so much as the loneliness of his beloved flock; he consoled himself however in this separation by daily petitioning the Supreme Pastor of souls to watch lovingly over his charge. As far as he himself only was concerned, he bore the hardships of his exile with incomparable submission and resignation to the will of God. He consoled his companions, who were suffering for the Faith, and wrote several learned works, in which he so ably combated Arianism, that none of the heretics had the courage to reply. After the death of Thrasimund all the exiled Bishops were allowed to return to their flocks, and Fulgentius was welcomed back to his episcopal city by the Catholics with demonstrations of joy and congratulation more easily imagined than described. He reminded all that the infinite goodness of God was to be thanked for this inestimable favor, and immediately began to apply himself to his spiritual duties with even greater zeal than before. The wandering sheep were restored to the fold of Christ, abuses, which had crept in were corrected, sinners were led to the tribunal of penance, the pusillanimous were filled with renewed vigor, the weak in Faith were encouraged, the needy were assisted, in a word, all that might be expected from a man whose every word breathes

holiness, was accomplished by his daily exhortations and admonitions.

Among the many virtues for which this eminent Bishop was justly held in admiration, his humility, meekness, and patience are pre-eminent. He was never heard using the least expression in self-praise, or any hasty, abusive language, which might leave a trace of displeasure or of injury on the heart of his neighbor; he never betrayed the least sign of impatience even amid the most adverse circumstances and the most trying insults and persecutions; but what shall we say of his affection and tender solicitude for the temporal, and still more for the spiritual welfare of his people? The continual practice of these and many other virtues rendered the name of St. Fulgentius dear and noble in the eyes of God and of men; the latter desired nothing more than that he should live for ever among them, that they might always bask in the sunlight of his presence, his love and his tenderness; but his heavenly Master longed to bestow on him the well-merited crown of eternal life, and favored him with the foreknowledge of his approaching end. Eager to prepare himself better for this solemn occasion, the holy man sought the company of some spiritual persons, renowned for the holiness of their lives, and dwelling on a neighboring isle. But he had scarcely entered his new home, when a large number of his brethren in Religion called upon him and with tears besought him to return to the monastery, that they might have the consolation of witnessing his last moments. Fulgentius yielded to their request, returned to his convent, but was soon seized with so severe an attack of sickness that he passed forty entire days and nights in the most excruciating pain without ever experiencing a moment's alleviation. During this trying period he surpassed himself in patience, never uttering the least word of complaint despite the length and intensity of his sufferings, and continually raising his eyes to heaven, upon which he called; "Lord, now grant me patience, hereafter pardon, grace and mercy." When his long torments had at length ceased, he exhorted the bystanders to firmness in the Faith, and to zeal in the service of God, and directed his income to be distributed among the poor. He then occupied himself in devout aspirations and at length yielded up his soul, adorned with so many virtues, into the bosom of his Creator, where it should enjoy the everlasting sweets of heaven. He died on the 1st of January A. D. 529, at the age of sixty.



On the same day the holy Abbot Odilo breathed his last. He was a native of Auvergne, a noble by birth, but rendered more noble by his virtue and holiness. When a child he was deprived of his strength so that he could neither walk nor stand. The servant, who usually carried him about in her arms, was once passing a church, and having to attend to some important affairs, seated the child on the threshold of the church door and repaired to a neighboring house, where she was to transact the business. Odilo turned round and crawled into the church till he had reached the altar of the blessed Virgin; here he prayed for a short time, when to the astonishment of the spectators life was restored to his paralyzed limbs, he stood up, and walked home with a buoyant and strong step. From that hour he cherished a most tender devotion to the Mother of God, and ever preserved a grateful remembrance of her intercession in his favor. As he advanced in age he made great progress in the liberal arts, but still more in the science of sanctity, under the guidance of the holy Abbot Majolus; and, to render his eternal happiness more secure, he earnestly requested of this Saint admittance into the monastery of Cluny. Majolus graciously heard his petition, and Odilo made such rapid strides in the path to perfection that he was unanimously chosen to succeed his former guide in the capacity of Abbot.

But it was only after clear evidence that such was the will of God that His humble servant could be induced to take this burden on himself. His example rather than his words were a stimulus to his subjects, whether in the choir where he was always the first in attendance and the most devout in chanting, or by the practice of penance, which he made most rigorous, or by his incomparable zeal and assiduity in menial employments, by his ever ready submission to crosses and humiliations, or by his self-annihilation in his words and deeds: a word of self-praise was never heard coming from his lips. His tenderness for the poor was so great, that on several occasions he not only emptied the granaries of the monastery for their relief, but even in peculiarly hard seasons sold the vessels and other ornaments of the church to provide the people with bread, which the Lord frequently miraculously multiplied when it was in his hands. While distributing alms he took occasion to warn the poor against falling into such crimes, as men placed in their circumstances are liable to commit, but to imitate the conduct of the pious Tobias and of the just man Lazarus by patience

under their sufferings. Towards sinners, in whom he noticed a disposition to do real penance, he was very gentle and meek, confessing that he had rather give an account to God of his meekness than of his having indulged excessive zeal. This spirit of mildness induced the most depraved and hardened sinners to make their confessions to him, who never imposed any excessive penance on them, but feelingly inculcated the necessity of penance and of serious amendment in their conduct.

The holy man became renowned throughout the entire country by the practice of these and many other spiritual works. But the whole of Christendom resounds with his praises for the deep interest which he took in obtaining the succor of heaven for the poor souls suffering in Purgatory. It was he who first ordained that not only in his own monastery, but also in all others where he exerted influence, the commemoration of the faithful departed should be made on the day following the Feast of All Saints, and that on this same day, Masses and other expiatory works should be offered to God for their relief. This praiseworthy ordinance was not only approved by the Pope but also promulgated and carried out through the whole Christian world, to the incalculable advantage and consolation of innumerable souls. His last hour being foreshown to him by the Lord, he prepared himself with the most exact care, and departed this life in the eighty-seventh year of his age. He was favored with the vision of many souls, released from Purgatory through his intercessions, who invited and conducted him to the Paradise of delights, which they now enjoyed.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Humility, patience and meekness are indeed three most noble virtues, and deserving of the assiduity with which St. Fulgentius and St. Odilo, like our amiable Saviour, applied themselves to their practice. How do you imitate these Saints or rather Christ our Lord Himself in the cultivation of these virtues? Do you put yourself above others; are you full of yourself and of your merits; do you seek the esteem and consideration of men; do you aspire more after the honors and dignities of the world, than after the grace and friendship of God? Is all this Christian humility? Are you harsh and imperious when you address your neighbor; do you treat him very improperly, calumniate him and perhaps act so uncharitably as to wish him evil? If so, can you say that you practice the meekness required of a Christian? You suffer from some slight inconvenience, writhe with vexation under an insult, and are weighed down by some misfortune; in the mean time there is no end to your murmurs and complaints. Is such conduct compatible with Christian patience? Answer yourself and then seriously

resolve to be for the future more studious of these three virtues. Never prefer yourself to others; do not speak in praise of yourself, nor aim at the vain applause of men; never hurt your neighbor's feelings with cutting, severe remarks, nor by the use of slander and invectives. Bear your crosses and trials, your afflictions, your insults and persecutions without murmuring against God. Do not complain if your burdens be too oppressive, or your afflictions be overpowering or too lasting. Then is the time to turn still more confidently to God, to beg His grace to suffer with patience, repeating the words of St. Fulgentius; "Lord, now grant me patience; hereafter, pardon, grace and mercy."

II. Both these Saints were fore-shown the day of their death, and both prepared themselves for their last hour with renewed zeal. God does not generally reveal to us the hour of our death. Why? "That we may not," says St. Athanasius, "become arrogant in sin and remiss in good works."—For if the generality of men foreknew the day and the hour of their death, they would perform little or no good, since they would have no reason to fear an unexpected death. In fact they might devise new means of sin and cast aside all anxiety till the approach of their last hour. The penance, which they would postpone till that moment, would either fail to appear, or if performed be without any fruit or value. For what can it avail, when practised through a mere slavish fear of eternal punishment, and the want of

time to offend God still more? Almighty God then consults our interests by not disclosing to us our last hour, as St. Gregory shows in these words: "Our Creator has willed to keep our last moment hidden from us, that we may be always ready to meet the summons, not knowing when it will come." Our Divine Saviour gives us the same warning in the Gospel, and illustrates his doctrine by several comparisons: "Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves like to men, who wait for their lord, when he shall return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately" (Luke xii. 35, 36). And again: "If the householder did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch. Be you then also ready; for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come" (Luke xii. 39, 40). In another place, after descanting on the well-known parable of the ten Virgins, he closes with these words: "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour" (Matt. xxv. 13). Attend to His admonition, because we are ignorant of our closing day, we must watch and be always prepared to die. This is God's end in not disclosing to us the day of our death. Therefore set your affairs in order, and be in such a situation that when death calls it may find you ready: "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching" (Luke xii. 37).

NINTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. JULIAN AND ST. BASILISSA.

Among the illustrious martyrs of the Christian name, St. Julian is justly famous. Born at Antioch, in Syria, of Christian parents, and blessed with a truly Christian culture, he longed to serve God as perfectly as possible, and to attain this end he bound himself, in youth, by a vow of perpetual chastity. But when, as the age of manhood approached, his parents desired him to enter the matrimonial state, and Julian was, on the one side, unwilling to make known the vow which he had taken, and, on the other, to be disobedient, he asked for a delay of seven days, the whole of which time he spent in fervent prayers to obtain from on high a knowledge of the course he ought to take. On the seventh night, during his sleep, he was directed to follow the wishes of his parents, and at the same time received the promise that the Lord Himself would preserve his chastity inviolate. Consoled by this promise, Julian returned to his parents with the answer that he was ready to do their will by entering the connubial state. Soon after followed his espousal and marriage with Basilissa, a maiden renowned throughout the entire city for her piety and her wealth.

On the wedding-day, as soon as the new-married couple entered the sitting-room, Basilissa perceived an inexpressibly charming odor of roses and lilies. She was astonished at the fact, because it was then mid-winter, when the growth of such plants was altogether out of the question. She accordingly asked her husband Julian what was the cause of this odor, and what its meaning. "This odor," answered Julian, "proceeds from Christ our Lord, who feeds among the lilies, is a lover of purity, and bestows a special reward in heaven on those who, through love for Him, embrace a life of perpetual virginity." He then acquainted her with the vow which he had made, and asked her if she felt inclined to do the same. Basilissa, moved interiorly, dropped on her knees, and vowed to live in continent virginity with her husband. At that very moment the room was lighted up by a heavenly brilliancy. Our Divine Lord and His blessed Mother appeared to them, and assured the two virgins of their help, while an angel held before them the Book of Life, wherein he inscribed their names with golden characters. Words fail to depict the consolation which flooded their souls at

this glorious vision. They passed the entire night in praising and thanking the goodness of God in their regard, and carried the robe of virginity unsullied to the grave. After the death of their parents they distributed their goods among the poor, and purchased two houses for the use of those who desired to serve God in continual virginity, one for men and the other for women. Julian retired to the former, Basilissa to the latter, and there led virtuous and holy lives.

Several years after, when the persecution of the Christians by Diocletian and Maximian was renewed in the East, Julian and Basilissa became very anxious for the fate of their companions, and with prayers and tears entreated the Lord to grant themselves and their spiritual children grace and fortitude in the approaching conflict. Our good Lord revealed to Basilissa the noble part which her virginal spouse, Julian, should take in the cruel drama, and foretold her peaceful exit, at Antioch, from the sorrows of this life to the joys of the next, as well as that of her virgin daughters, before the outbreak of the persecution. All these predictions were verified. Julian, to whom Basilissa had communicated her vision, prepared himself for the struggle, which began soon after the death of his holy wife. Marcian, the Roman Governor, came to Antioch with express orders to exterminate Christianity from the land. Hearing that Julian was now the most energetic champion of the Faith, he sent him a message to command him and all his brethren, in the name of the Emperor, to offer sacrifice to the imperial deities. But Julian answered, "I shall give to Cæsar what is his, but I cannot obey the orders which he now gives, as they are opposed to the commands of the one true God." The governor was no sooner informed of his reply than he gave orders to have Julian chained and brought before his tribunal, and the house, with all its Christian inmates, to be burned to the ground. The command was carried out in both points. The first attempt made by the tyrant, when the confessor was presented to him, was to gain him over by flattery and promises; but finding his efforts unavailing, he had recourse to threats and torments. Pages would fail to recount all the pains and tortures which our noble Christian hero withstood, as well as the numberless attendant achievements which he wrought. Among others, the following are characteristic: The soldiers dragged the Saint through all the streets of the city, heaping upon him all the insults and tortures which their ingenuity could devise. Celsus, the only son of the governor, happened to be returning from school at the time that the mournful cortege was passing. While looking at the noble hero, he saw two angels placing a precious crown

on his head, as well as on the brows of his fellow-martyrs. This vision, and still more an interior impulse of Divine grace, moved the boy to cast himself at the martyr's feet and cry out aloud that he wanted to become a Christian, to obtain a crown like that of Julian. The soldiers endeavored by main force to drive him away, but all to no purpose; for he clung so firmly to the holy confessor that some of the attendants who employed violent measures lost the use of their arms. Marcian, who was apprised of the fact, was infuriate, and denounced Julian as a sorcerer, and threatened him with the most appalling tortures should he not undo the charm. He then commanded the presence of his son Celsus, and covered him with the fondest caresses and adulations; but his flattery was as fruitless as the violence of the soldiers. The youth confessed Christ to be the true God, and proclaimed that to die for Him was his only desire. The governor was completely outwitted, and in his vexation gave orders for the imprisonment of the noble boy and of Julian in a dungeon. Here the Lord provided for the baptism of Celsus by a priest: with him twenty of the guards, who had been converted to the faith, were baptized. Some time after, the tyrant had a caldron filled with pitch and brimstone and placed on a heap of wood. He then called for Julian, Celsus, and other Christians, showed them the caldron which he had prepared for their torture, and threatened to throw them all into it, there to be burnt alive, if they would not on the spot deny the Catholic Faith. The valiant confessors declared themselves ready for any torments. When all the preparations had been made for carrying the sentence into effect, the governor had a corpse brought into court. At his command the bearers stood still, when he addressed Julian; "You Christians say that your Master has the power of restoring the dead to life. Well, try your hand here." The Saint, full of confidence in God, prayed for a few moments, and then addressed the corpse in these words: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, arise!" And behold! the dead man immediately sat upright, and cried out, with a loud voice: "The God of the Christians is the only true God. All who do not believe in Him will be lost forever." Who would not imagine that the governor would now readily acknowledge the truth? But he was far from entertaining the slightest notion of doing so. He ascribed the miracle to Julian's sorcery, had the new, resuscitated confessor of Christ thrown into prison, and Julian, together with Celsus and some of the Christians into the caldron. The wood is fired, the flames rise aloft, the pitch and the sulphur begin to melt, to crackle, to seethe; but the holy martyrs seem entirely unconcerned, show no signs of suffering, sit unhurt in their

caldron, and, like the three children in the Babylonian furnace, continue to sing the praises of the Lord.

All the bystanders were astonished at so great a miracle; even Marcian himself could not withhold his exclamations of surprise. Fearing a general uprising of the people, he ordered the heroic confessor to be again conducted to prison. Marcionilla, the mother of Celsus, now betook herself to the cell of her son, and endeavored, by the most tender entreaties, broken by a copious flow of tears, to make him forsake his Divine Master. But her appeal had a contrary effect. With a rich flow of heavenly wisdom, Celsus spoke so long and so earnestly to his mother, that she declared herself vanquished and resolved to become a Christian. At this news the rage of Marcian knew no bounds. He gave orders for the immediate decapitation of his wife, of Julian, and of his son Celsus. The command was promptly executed. The holy martyrs heard their death-sentence with unspeakable joy, and courageously met their fate in the year 311. An entirely different end befell the tyrant Marcian. A prey to melancholy, he fell into a severe illness, which was heightened by his being eaten alive, like another Herod, by worms, which oozed from his entrails.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Sts. Julian and Basilissa see their names enrolled in the Book of Life after they had taken their vow of chastity. Is your name inscribed in this Book? "Who knows," asked St. Bernard on one occasion, while preaching, "whether the names of all those whom I see before me are contained in the Book of Life?" You are not certain of this fact, nor can any living man be sure, without a special revelation from God. There are, however, as we are taught by the Fathers, different signs by which we can know whether we shall be of the number of the elect. These are the following: A wholesome, intense abhorrence for sin; a speedy return to penance after the commission of a fault; the immediate effects of true penance; Christian endurance of our crosses and afflictions; mercy

towards the unfortunate; diligent attention to the Divine Word; the more frequent and more devout reception of the Sacraments; in fine, a true devotion to Mary, the Queen of Heaven and Earth. But there is one mark superior in excellence to those just enumerated; it is an unwearied attention to virginal purity, and a sedulous flight from the detestable excesses of the contrary vice. Examine whether this mark is to be found in your soul; then judge if your name is written in the Book of Life. If it is not, be careful to secure it while there is time; for if you delay any longer you will have just cause to fear an eternal death.

II. "I shall give to Cæsar what is Cæsar's; but I cannot obey the orders which he now gives, as they are in contradiction to the com-

mands of the one true God." Such was the answer of St. Julian. He did not obey, because the wishes of the Emperor were sinful. He submitted to all pangs and tortures rather than offend God to please the Emperor, gain his good graces, or fear his displeasure and anger. Never offend God that you may please men; never do what is sinful through the desire of obtaining or preserving the favor of any one; never yield to the fear of giving displeasure to a creature, even should you draw down on your head his wrath and revenge. Should the most powerful monarch of the world command what God forbids, you should not obey him; for all the mighty ones of earth cannot compare with God in power. You are under greater obligations to

Him than to any human being; His grace is more necessary to you than their favor; His indignation and displeasure are more to be feared than the anger of men; He can shelter you from their attacks: the injury they may inflict is, besides, limited to the body and by time, and is of short duration; but God can punish you, body and soul together, for all eternity. And who can befriend you when His anger is let loose on you? He can snatch you from the hands of men, whoever they may be, as He has often done; but who can save from the hands of the mighty Jehovah? "See ye," He Himself says, "that I alone am, and there is no other God besides me . . . that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut. xxxii. 39).

TENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. WILLIAM, ARCHBISHOP OF BOURGES, IN AQUITAINE: ST. WOLFSTAN, BISHOP OF WORCESTER, IN ENGLAND.

The names of these two Saints were first inserted in the new Martyrology, enlarged by Benedict XIV. For this reason we shall here give an account of their lives, though the latter is commemorated on a different day. St. William was born of noble parents in France, and in early childhood was confided to the care of his uncle, an Archdeacon. This man, who was eminent for his erudition and spirit of prayer, undertook to imprint lessons of wisdom and solid devotion on the mind of little William, and soon had the satisfaction of witnessing the early appearance of the desired fruit, the pleasure and delight which the boy took, not in games nor in other innocent amusements of youth, but in prayer and study. His parents, who took a greater interest in his temporal than his spiritual welfare, procured him two rich benefices. But he refused the gift, and to secure to himself the possession of a Heavenly treasure, entered the cloister, where his rapid advancement in perfection induced his brethren to choose him as their superior, and later on moved

the spiritual authority to elevate him to the Archiepiscopal See of Bourges. The announcement of this election drew from the Saint abundant sighs and tears; nothing but obedience could induce him to acquiesce in the choice. On assuming this dignity he made it his rule to give his inferiors an example of total abstention from evil, and of a continual practice of good in both his words and actions. In fact his life was so regular that no one could discover in him anything blameworthy; he kept a wary eye on all his conduct, made a most searching test of the state of his conscience daily, and, when he discovered the slightest failing, he gave himself up to such a flood of sorrow that the greatest sinners could not equal him in their grief for their grievous faults, besides imposing on himself fresh practices of penance. He passed not only the whole day but a great part of the night in prayer and contemplation, and was seldom without shedding bitter tears during that exercise. He had the greatest reverence for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and exhorted others to attend it with all due respect. "When I consider," he said, "that Jesus Christ daily presents himself to His Father in the sacrifice of our altars, I feel no less pain than if I were to see Him anew sacrificed on the gibbet of Calvary." It was this pang that drew from his eyes an incessant flow of tears during Mass.

He willingly entered into spiritual conversations, and preferred the company of those who introduced such subjects, while he fled the society of such as spoke only on idle topics. He denied his body all innocent indulgence, never tasted flesh meat though he prescribed it for others, wore a rough hair shirt till his last hour, and, in a word, employed every means to mortify and reduce the flesh to subjection. His treatment of the poor and suffering was far different, he nursed the former as if he were their father, visited and consoled the latter with the tenderness of a mother, and restored many to health by the imposition of his hands. He went through the entire Archdiocese in person, preached with the fire of an Apostle in all the cities and villages, and had the special gift of leading the most hardened criminals to repentance by the exposition of the torments of hell, and by his prayers and fasting. He not only patiently bore the injuries which he received, but even requited the offenders with kind offices. After spending many years in the practice of these virtues, he obtained a foreknowledge of his death through a special revelation from God. He fell into a violent fever. Four days before his death the saintly Archbishop discoursed to his flock for the last time on the manner of preparing for the final call, then lay on his bed, asked for, and received with great

devotion, the last Sacraments, and at length causing the floor to be strewn with ashes, and having been laid on it, clothed with a hair shirt, he breathed his last amid repeated aspirations, A. D. 1209.



St. Wolfstan, the twenty-fifth Bishop of Worcester, England, was born of pious parents in the county of Warwick, and received at their hands a devout training. He acquired, at an early age, a great disgust for temporal goods and joys, and entered the cloister, where the splendor of his virtues, especially his fidelity to the Rule, marked him out as fit to hold the office of Prior; he was accordingly unanimously raised to this post, and, during his long government, advanced the interests of his inferiors, to whom his whole conduct, rather than his words, proved a powerful incentive in the walks of perfection. At prayer he was ever the first and the most devout, in labor the most industrious, in fasting and other penitential works the most austere. Each week he passed three entire days without any refreshment, and on the others partook of nothing but barley bread and boiled herbs. He never let a single idle, impatient, or unbecoming word escape him, and most carefully avoided from his youth the least transgression of holy purity; thus when a lady of rank, on one occasion, made an improper proposal to him, he was shocked, made the sign of the Cross, and made the shameless woman beat a most ignominious retreat, the whole time denouncing her as a child of death, a tool of Satan. Other similar examples are recorded in the life of this generous champion of virginity. He possessed the gift of delivering the possessed, of healing the sick, and of prophecy. The reputation which his miracles and sanctity won him, caused his election to the vacant See of Worcester by the ecclesiastical authorities. Edward, the royal saint, was delighted with the choice, and himself presented him with the crozier in testimony of his confirmation and approbation. The humble servant of God resisted, it is true, but, finding resistance useless, resigned himself to the will of God, and used all his powers to acquit himself of his episcopal duties with all scrupulous exactness.

Some years after, the new King, an unworthy successor of the saintly Edward, refused to acknowledge Wolfstan as the rightful Bishop. An assembly of Bishops was held, who declared him unfit for the episcopal dignity, on pretence of his lacking the necessary knowledge. The Archbishop, who presided over the council, ordered him to give up his crozier and ring. Wolfstan answered, "I know that I am unworthy of the

episcopal dignity, and, guided by this knowledge, did my utmost to escape it; but as I was forced to accept it, and was presented with this crozier in confirmation of my election, I shall restore it to him who has been the donor." As soon as he had finished he went to the grave of St. Edward, planted the crozier in the tombstone, and addressed the departed monarch: "Thou knowest, sire, with what reluctance I assumed this burden, and under what compulsion thou didst lay me; I restore thee the crozier which thou hast given me; take it, and give it to whomsoever thou wilt." When the assembly heard of what the holy Bishop had done, and of his having divested himself of his episcopal insignia, they sent another Bishop to the grave with directions to return with the crozier; but it was so firmly fixed in the rock that it defied every effort, even the most violent, to loosen it. The presiding Archbishop, with a large number of the council, then repaired to the spot and became eye-witnesses of the miracle. They all acknowledged the injustice they had done the holy man, begged his pardon, and besought him to resume his crozier. He refused for a long time; but at last, amid a flood of tears, he approached the grave, and had no sooner touched the crozier, than it dropped, of its own accord, into his hand. He was afterwards reinstated in his See to the enthusiastic joy of his people, and spread around him the sweet odor of his virtues up to his eighty-seventh year, when he was called to receive his reward. A hundred years after his happy death, his sacred body, with all the episcopal insignia, was found intact.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. William both cultivated in himself and exhorted others to cherish a deep reverence for the most holy sacrifice of the Cross. Each evening he made a thorough examination of his conscience, wept bitterly for the least fault, and practiced an additional penance by way of atonement. Here are two points for our instruction and imitation. The sacrifice of the Mass is an oblation ordained by Christ Himself, immeasurably higher, more noble and more salutary than all the offerings of the old dispensation. For in our sacrifice we have the

same victim that once offered Himself to His Heavenly Father from the wood of the Cross for our redemption. Can there be conceived any other more noble or more effective sacrifice than this? Can any other victim be possessed of greater value in the eyes God than His only-begotten Son, in whom He is well pleased? Can we hope to obtain more abundant grace through any other source than through the unceasing labors, bitter pangs, and ignominious death of Jesus Christ, who is presented and offered to God in the sacrifice of the Mass.

Ponder on these words and cherish a due esteem for this holy sacrifice, and give proofs of your reverence by hearing Mass more frequently and more devoutly in future. So much for the first point. As regards the second, allow me to advise you to accustom yourself to an examination of your conscience every evening. To make this examination fruitful, the following method should be followed: first, return thanks to God for all the benefits, especially for those of the present day. Secondly, beg his grace to know the faults which you have committed during the day. Thirdly, examine what sins you have committed or what good you have neglected. Fourthly, excite yourself to a hearty sorrow and beg God's pardon for your sins. Fifthly, make a firm resolution of amendment. This process does not require much time; all that I desire is that it be brief and serious. I pray you, for your loving Saviour's sake, do not neglect this examination. Your eternal salvation depends on it; for supposing that you had fallen into grievous sin during the day, and at night met with a sudden death, you would be a happy man if you had made a serious examination, perfectly repented of your faults, and resolved to confess them as soon as possible, and thus regained the favor of God; but if you have not done so, you will fall with your sins into the fathomless abyss. These motives will suffice at present to induce you never to retire without a previous examination of your conscience.

II. St. Wolfstan teaches us, by example, how we should regard the person who tempts us to sin, espe-

cially against holy purity, viz.: as a mere tool, an instrument of the devil; for the enemy of mankind inveigles us into crime through his instrumentality. How can you believe his assertion that his base proposal is no sin, that his wishes and conduct proceed from pure love, that he has no evil intentions, and the like? Are you ignorant that the devil is the father of lies? Or can you believe that he loves you, and acts only through love? Tell me honestly, if the enemy were to stand before you and make the same suggestions which are offered by a shameless wretch, would you listen to him, would you follow his advice? Assuredly, if you had a grain of common sense you would not; you would neither believe nor hearken to his suggestions; nay, not only would you not yield, but you would drive him off with the words of our Lord: "Go behind me Satan!" But why do you not banish him; why do you believe and follow the devil; why do you give ear to him, when he speaks to you by his tool, and incites you to evil by the false declaration that there is no need of fearing sin, that he loves you, that he has no evil intentions, and so on? If you love your soul beware of such a man as you would of a most treacherous enemy, for he is a tool in the hands of your enemy; do not listen to him nor trust him; fly from him, and banish him out of your sight, saying, with the holy Bishop: "Avaunt, thou child of death, thou cunning tool of Satan." If it is not in your power to fly from him, resist his shafts with might and main. "Resist the devil," says St. James, "and he will fly from you" (Jas. iv 7).

ELEVENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. THEODOSIUS, CONFESSOR.

Magariasso, a small town in Cappadocia, was the place where St. Theodosius first saw the light, and was brought up in the fear of the Lord by pious parents. When he had reached an age suitable for choosing a state of life, he journeyed to Jerusalem to visit the holy places. Here he met a famous monk, who dwelt in a small hut near the tower of David. From him he received his first lessons in the spiritual course, which he undertook by the practice of severe austerities upon a mountain, situate near a newly-built church. During his life of thirty years in this solitude he never tasted a morsel of bread, but fed only on dates, acorns, and herbs. Several young men, who had heard of his life and his holiness, called upon him, and manifested their desire to become his disciples. In a short time the applicants became so numerous that it was necessary to build a large monastery. His first rule was the continual remembrance of death. To assist them in this exercise, he caused a grave to be dug within the precincts of the monastery, that its sight each day might remind all that death cannot be escaped, and that they would soon be confined within these narrow enclosures. The holy abbot was once standing with his disciples beside the grave, and after keeping his eyes fixed on it for a long time, asked, "Which of us will be the first to inhabit this grave?" Basil, one of his disciples, fell upon his knees and exclaimed, "Father, give me thy blessing, I shall be the first." Theodosius blessed the youth, and, forty days after, Basil passed to a better life without any previous illness or pain of any sort.

Near the monastery, St. Theodosius built a home for strangers, and also one for the poor and the suffering, towards whom he bore an ardent affection. He took them their meals, served them with untiring energy day and night, bandaged their wounds, cleared their sores from all purulent matter, and, in a word, did all that could be expected from a devoted father. He exhorted his brethren to perform the same charitable offices by recalling to their minds these words of our Lord: "Whatsoever you did to one of these my least brethren, you did to me." It was frequently impossible to obtain provisions sufficient to feed so many mouths; but confidence in Divine Providence, which never failed him, was more than once rewarded with a striking miracle, by the multiplication of the little that was at hand, or

by the abundant alms bestowed by an unexpected benefactor. An instance of this latter timely intervention was witnessed on the eve of a certain Easter Sunday. A messenger called upon the holy Abbot and dolefully announced that there was not a morsel of bread or of any other kind of food in the house for the morrow. The man of God replied, without the least sign of anxiety, "Do not grow sad. The God who formerly fed so many thousands of Israelites in the wilderness, and in the New Dispensation filled so great a multitude with a few loaves, will not forget us; for neither His power nor His goodness is straitened." And behold! in a few moments some men, entire strangers to the community, came up with so great a quantity of bread and other provender, that they had sufficient for many days. Again, when they were sorely pressed by want, a man drove past the monastery with his horse laden with provisions. It was not at all his intention to give any of it to the inmates of the convent, but on arriving in front of the house his horse stood still and withstood every spur to make him proceed. The traveller saw in this wonder an indication of God's will that he should share his provisions with the conventuals, which he accordingly did.

Such miracles merited for the Saint a great reputation, which was heightened by the proofs which he gave of his zeal for the true Faith. There arose at that time a sect called Acephali, who openly opposed the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon. Theodosius faced these heretics with a firm countenance, and strengthened the Catholics in the true Faith. The Emperor Anastasius, who showed himself favorable to the new sect, endeavored to win the saint to his side, and, as an inducement, sent him a large sum of money, without, however, mentioning his motive for doing so. Theodosius took the money and gave it to the poor; but when he was informed of the Emperor's design by a messenger, he gave the undaunted answer that neither he nor any of his brethren would embrace the new, impious tenets, but would rather lay down their lives for the only true Faith. He thereupon ascended the pulpit and openly denounced their doctrines in these words: "If any one do not uphold the four holy General Councils, as well as the four Holy Gospels, let him be anathema."

The Emperor was enraged at this freedom, and banished the holy champion from the country; but the tyrant, not long after, being struck by lightning, Theodosius returned to his convent, where he fell a prey to a long and severe illness, in the one hundred and fifth year of his age. Spite of his unbearable sufferings, he never ceased praying; even in his sleep his lips

moved as if in prayer; in fact, he discontinued his aspirations only when the last spark of life had been extinguished. Towards the end of his long career he was known only as "the man of God," because St. Simeon Stylites, on his first visit to the holy Abbot, and at the first glance, saluted him, "Hail, Theodosius! thou man of God."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Theodosius was full of compassion for the poor and of tenderness towards the afflicted. But his charity was not confined to himself; he endeavored to infuse the same spirit into others, knowing well that our Divine Lord regards the good we do to others as done to Himself. Weigh this thought well; on the last day Christ will say to the just: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me." Then shall the just answer Him, saying: "Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee; thirsty, and gave Thee drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger, and took Thee in; or naked, and covered Thee? Or when did we see Thee sick or in prison, and came to Thee?" (Matt. xxv. 34-40.) But Christ, our Lord, will answer them: "Amen, I say to you; as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (*Ibid.* 40). It is clear from this text that our good Jesus considers the services done others as done to Himself. This truth we find confirmed in the lives of saints, to whom our Divine Saviour presented Himself as a beggar, an outcast, or a sick man, and afterwards revealed

Himself in His true character. Now, I ask you whether this fact should not suffice to engage you in acts of mercy and compassion towards the unfortunate, whenever it is in your power? St. Chrysostom had many centuries ago asked the same question in different words: "What greater proof could Jesus Christ have given us? What stronger and more emphatical motive for the exercise of works of mercy could He have proposed to us than the assurance that He Himself, in the person of the poor, is the object of our charity; that he whom the sight of an unfortunate fellow-mortal fails to move, may be softened by beholding in him the person of Jesus Christ?" Reflect seriously on this important, consoling truth. Contemplate the person of your Saviour in that wan, helpless form, and run to his assistance as speedily as possible. What would be your conduct if your loving Saviour had taken the guise of a beggar or an helpless creature, and now implored your help?

II. St. Theodosius finds in the frequent recollection of death a powerful incentive to good for both himself and his disciples. This exercise is truly one of the most effective antidotes against sin, and one of the strongest stimulants to good. If you are exposed to sin, make this reflection: "I may die in my sins, and, if I should, what would be my lot? Alas! the unquenchable flames of hell." It is a powerful

consideration, which will keep you from misdeeds. If you have already fallen into sin, seriously ponder: "I may be ushered out of existence this very day, and if I neglect repenting of my sin beforehand, I am lost for all eternity." This reflection will induce you to an opportune repentance. If you meet with an occasion for the performance of some good work, or the endurance of some trial, say, within yourself, "Should I die soon, and have garnered no harvest for an eternity of bliss, I can have no hope of enjoying any happiness." Such considerations will encourage you to the performance of good works, and of submitting to your

crosses and trials with Christian fortitude. Let your model be St. Theodosius, and often recall to your mind the last stage of man, that you may not, like others, be so foolish as to reject every thought of death, through fear of being interrupted in your sinful career. This foolhardiness paves the way to all kinds of crimes, to impenitence, to eternal ruin; while the opposite course is a guarantee against the folly of sin, a promoter of justice, a security for never-ending happiness, as St. Augustine properly observes, saying, "Nothing shields man so securely from the shafts of Satan as the remembrance of death."

TWELFTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. ARCADIUS, MARTYR; ST. MEINRAD, CONFESSOR.

About the year of our Lord 260, when the Christians of Mauritania were beset by all available means to coerce them into compliance with the impious wishes of the pagans, Arcadius, a distinguished knight and devout Christian, set out for his estate in Cæsarea, to prepare himself by prayer, fasting, and vigils, for the lowering storm. As soon as the Roman governor had been apprised of the knight's inattendance at the rites of the pagans, he sent some soldiers with strict orders to lead him to the place of sacrifice. As Arcadius was not at home, the soldiers seized his cousin, and, by order of the governor, threw him into prison, where he was to be detained till he would give information of the knight's retreat. Arcadius had no sooner heard this fact than, unwilling to expose himself any longer to the loss of the martyr's crown, he hastened to the governor, whom he addressed: "If my cousin is in chains on my account, I pray you release him, for he is innocent. Here I am of my own accord, ready to give an account of my conduct." "I forgive you for your flight," answered the governor, "and you need fear no punishment, if you but consent to sacrifice to the gods." "What!" exclaimed Arcadius, "do you imagine that the servants of God would yield

to the abominations of idolatry through fear of losing their miserable lives? We know that it is written, 'Christ is my life, and death is my victory. Fabricate all the instruments of torture of which you can think, you shall not frighten us from the true Faith.'

The governor gnashed his teeth with rage, and ordered the intrepid confessor of Christ to be tormented, not, however, by a quick death, but by a variety of racks and implements of torture, that his sufferings might be longer and more acute. The cruel order was carried out with the most cruel exactness. The executioners first cut off his fingers one after the other, then his hands and arms, with an axe, until nothing remained of his body but the trunk, without hands, arms, feet, knees, or thighs. But the Lord miraculously preserved him alive. The servants of the law, weary of their barbarous work, at last severed the head from the body. All the bystanders were for the moment struck with consternation at so frightful and horrible a spectacle, with which no previous martyrdom could compare; but their admiration knew no bounds at sight of the heroic endurance displayed by the martyr amid his inhuman treatment. He complained of neither the length nor the intensity of his torments, but, raising his eyes and heart to heaven, praised and blessed the Lord, for whose love he bore so much; then, turning to the spectators, he renewed his profession of Faith, which he exhorted all to embrace.

Nothing, however, was more touching than his apostrophe to his severed members as they lay beside him on the ground: "Thrice-happy members, esteemed worthy of serving your God! Never have I loved you when joined to my body, as I now rejoice when I see you sundered. Thus it behooves that a long separation may be rewarded after the lapse of mortality with the union of immortality. You are now members of Christ, and exceeding great is my joy that I belong to Christ." His address to the bystanders is no less remarkable: "What I suffer, ye witnesses of this extraordinary spectacle, is but little: he who looks forward to an immortality of bliss cares nought for these slight pains. Forsake the vain gods, who are powerless to help you; acknowledge my God, who helps me, to die for whom is life, to suffer is joy, whose love never fades, whose glory will ever increase, to whose bosom I fly, there to enjoy eternal sweets for a few drops of present bitterness, from whom I shall never be separated." Thus spoke this Christian hero, whose death closed a drama unusually tragic.



In this same month, but on another day, the holy monk Meinrad closed his life by a shorter and less painful martyrdom on the spot now famous as the shrine of our Lady of Einsiedeln. The scion of an illustrious house, he was born at Sulgen, a city of Swabia, and at five years of age placed in the Benedictine monastery of Reichenau, where he was trained in the study of piety and of the liberal arts. At a riper age he applied for admission into the Benedictine Order, and, obtaining his request, soon became a perfect master in spirituality. After his ordination to the priesthood, he was sent by his superiors to a monastery situate near the Lake of Zurich, Bellingen by name, to lead the monks up the hill of spiritual wisdom. The holy man acquitted himself so satisfactorily of this duty as to gain the esteem of all, both superiors and disciples. A burning, unquenchable desire of serving the Lord in the desert induced him to seek a suitable site on the top of the Etselbergen mountains. Finding one, he obtained permission of his superiors to take up his abode there in a little cell, built for him by the charity of a pious widow, where he passed a period of seven years.

Meinrad divided his time between prayer, fasting, and meditation on the mysteries of Faith. The fame of his holy life soon spread through the entire region, and occasioned a great concourse of men seeking for solace and assistance in their spiritual and temporal infirmities. But the Saint, who had no desire but to serve God in solitude and obscurity, left the Etselbergen mountain for another place, in a plain situated in a forest between two towering mountains. Here he could be little disturbed by men. Hildegardis, abbess of the princely convent of nuns at Zurich, who had visited Meinrad several times in his first retreat, built him a small chapel and near it a little cell. His devotion to the Mother of God, which he had cultivated from early childhood, now moved him to erect this chapel in her honor and to adorn it with her picture. His desire was gratified, and he took possession of his new apartments. But he had scarcely resumed his devotional exercises when the evil spirits endeavored by frightful apparitions, tumultuous uproar, and a thousand other distractions, to drive him from his cell. He, however, was not intimidated; he cast himself on his knees before the picture of the Blessed Virgin, and called on her for help. Immediately an angel from heaven appeared, who put the powers of hell to flight, with the prohibition never to molest him

again. From that hour he enjoyed tranquillity for the rest of his life, which he passed in great holiness. Every moment of his now undisturbed days was given to exercises of devotion and piety, which made him more like an angel than a man. The inhabitants of the neighboring dwellings, skirting the forest, soon heard of these wonders and went to him in crowds, some to pass the rest of their days under his guidance, others to obtain from him consolation and succor in their afflictions. At first nothing was so annoying to the holy man as these visits, for he had no higher wish than to serve God unknown to the world. But at last, finding escape impossible, he instructed all who called upon him in the teachings of holiness and in the principles of a Christian life.

The profit to souls which his instructions produced was too great for the enemy of man to endure any longer. He suggested to two villains that, as Meinrad would receive a large sum of money from his audience, they could easily possess themselves of it by putting him to death. Richard and Peter, the two villains, listened to this suggestion and took their way with the firm resolution of taking the money and killing the Saint. When they reached his cell, Meinrad was at the altar offering the holy sacrifice. God revealed to him his approaching death, and the Saint joyfully resigned himself to the will of God, who was to crown His faithful servant gloriously through the instrumentality of the wicked. The two murderers looked at the priest for a long time through a crevice in the bolted door, and at the conclusion of the Mass knocked and asked for admittance. The holy priest remained in prayer a short time before the altar, commended the combat to the Lord, and proceeding with a joyful countenance to the fiends, opened the door, graciously invited them into his cell, gave them refreshments of bread and wine, and generously offered them his coat. But they were not so easily satisfied; they wanted money, they said, all the money he had in his possession. But when the holy monk declared that he had not a cent of money, the wretches ruthlessly threw him to the ground, and finished their fiendish work by strangulation. Meinrad, while lying on the ground, could only raise his eyes and hands to heaven, and in this posture gave up his soul.

The Lord soon made known the crime of the two villains, as well as the sanctity of his servant. Two ravens, which Meinrad had kept in his cell, began, on the approach of the murderers, to set up a fearful cry, and flew here and there, as if to call for help or to frighten the murderers. After the murder they flew after them, and pursued them until the arm of justice had seized and condemned to a well-merited punishment the guilty wretches.

The body of the saint emitted a delicious perfume, which filled the whole country. The scene of the murder is famous for the numberless cures wrought there. Eberhard, a prince of Hessen, Duke of Franconia, and Dean of Strasburg, in the year 934, took up his residence on the very spot which had witnessed the virtues of St. Meinrad, replaced his chapel and cell with a building, erected a magnificent church over it, and near by a Benedictine monastery. The picture of the Blessed Virgin, which was found in the chapel, is now famous throughout all Christendom for its numberless miracles. Trustworthy tradition relates that our Lord Himself consecrated the chapel on the night preceding the day on which Conrad, the holy Bishop of Constance, had determined to perform the ceremony.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Arcadius pronounces those members of the body happy which serve God, or are employed in His service. But unhappy are those members which, far from promoting the cause of God, serve but to impede it. Why? Because an eternal reward awaits the first, but everlasting disgrace the others. What fate awaits your members? Reflect on the use you make of them. If you employ them in the service of God, you may hope for an eternity of joy; but if you use them as means to offend God, then woe to you! Woe to your tongue, if it utters but lies, detractions, oaths, blasphemies, criminal talk, lewd jests, and buffoonery! Woe to your ears, if they are open only to scandal and sinful discourse! Woe to your hands, if they are used for any lascivious purpose, for theft, for the publication or the writing of criminal songs, or other similar works! Woe to your lips, your feet, and your other members, if employed in offending God, or not used when there is question of doing what is meritorious.

II. St. Meinrad invokes our heavenly Mother when he is as-

saulted by the devil; he immediately experiences the help of her prayers. The evil spirits do not, it is true, make such an open attack on you as on this saint; but they violently beset you with temptations. Have recourse to Mary, and earnestly beg, through her intercession, the grace of entire freedom from these temptations, or at least of manfully resisting the enemy. Listen to what Pope Innocent III. says: "Mary is called the early dawn of day, beautiful as the moon, glorious as the sun, and terrible as an army set in battle array. The moon shines at night, the sun during the day, the blushing dawn appears at break of day. By night, I understand sin; by the breaking day, repentance; and by the full day, grace. Let him, therefore, who finds himself in the night of sin, look up at the moon and pray to Mary, that she, by the merits of her Son, may move him to repentance. Let the penitent at the breaking day cast his eyes on the blushing dawn, and pray Mary to beg of her Divine Son the grace that he may make due reparation. But because the life of man on earth is a war-

fare, all those who are exposed to the attacks of their enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, should look for succor to the army set in battle array, and beg of Mary to send them reinforcements through her glorious Son. Who has ever made this appeal to her without being graciously heard?"

THIRTEENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. GODFRIED, CONFESSOR.

St. Godfried, who departed this life in the year 1127, and was buried in the monastery of Ilmstadt, was a Count of the House of Kappenberg, a lord of Westphalia, and a descendant of Charlemagne. His education had been pious, his career in the army no less so. As a general of the army, he never allowed any of his inferiors to do harm to any one, even should it be countenanced by the rights of warfare. Having once learned that one of his officers had taken several head of cattle, by way of spoils, from a farmer, he ordered him to return them to their owner, under pain of incurring his displeasure. On subsequently reflecting that it was possible that there would be more frequent misdeeds on the part of his inferiors, for which he might be held accountable before the Lord, he earnestly begged God to deliver him from the danger to which he was exposed of falling into so many sins. His prayer was heard.

There lived at that time the celebrated St. Norbert, who was the founder of a religious order and famed for his holiness of life. A scion of a noble race, he had fled the vanities of the world to lead a life of piety, and had built a number of monasteries to serve as retreats for those who followed in his footsteps. The holy founder came to the country where Godfried was encamped. The latter, after attending several of his sermons, felt in himself an ardent desire to bid adieu to all temporal goods, to give himself wholly and perfectly to the service of God, and to dispose of his castle of Kappenberg, together with all his estates and possessions, for the erection of a still greater number of monasteries and the support of God's special servants. But he had to encounter many obstacles in the execution of this project. He had a brother, whose consent was necessary to attain his end. Besides, he had a wife of very noble extraction, whose father and relatives would surely object to the change of the old castle of Kappenberg into a monastery. The

count was undaunted; he called upon St. Norbert, acquainted him with his purpose, and begged to be received among his followers. The saint consented, but on condition that he would remove the obstacles which lay in his way, and remain in secular dress till this had been accomplished. Godfried invoked the succor of heaven, and spoke to his brother first. He succeeded so well that his brother gave not only his consent, but also his promise to enter the order of St. Norbert. He next disclosed his intention to his wife, who not only approved of his design, but also declared that she would spend the rest of her days in a convent. Godfried was overpowered with joy at this favorable result, and without delay handed over the whole of his castle to St. Norbert, who changed it into a monastery, and peopled it with monks. The count gave also two other extensive estates for the erection of two more monasteries, one at Vorlar and the other at Ilmsstadt.

But Frederick, Count of Axensperg, the father-in-law of the magnanimous Godfried, energetically opposed this holy foundation, because he hoped that these extensive possessions would at some future day revert to his family. He gave out, too, that his daughter had been enticed into the cloister by cunning and treachery, or driven by force, and complained that it was a shame to deliver so promising an estate into such poor hands. Godfried himself appeared before him, generously represented the whole case, and proved to him clearly that the pretended abduction had no foundation whatever, and that the rights of not one single person had been injured by the donation. But all his arguments were lost on Frederick, who replied by threatening him with chains and bonds, with war and murder, and swearing that if he should catch Norbert, he would suspend him and the ass on which he usually rode from the window for daring to seize upon such possessions. Godfried perceived the danger to which he was exposed, of being cast into prison by the infuriate man; still he did not betray the least sign of fear, confident that his cause was just before God. In fact the Lord defended His servant, and punished the impious man who abused the pious donor. For, while Frederick was seated at table, and gave full scope to his denunciations of St. Norbert and the pious Godfried, he was suddenly attacked by a most violent rupture of his bowels and died a miserable death. So terrible a visitation caused others, who also had scoffed at Godfried's conduct, to hold their peace; for they saw that heaven approved of what he had done for the glory of God, his own incalculable advantage, and that of numerous souls.

Now that all obstacles had been overcome, the servant of

God, with his brother Otto, took the habit of the Order, and entered upon the spiritual course in the monastery of Kappenberg. Thence they were both sent to Premonstre, where the first house of the Order had been opened. In both monasteries St. Godfried gave proofs of an ardent spirit in all that pertains to spiritual perfection. When St. Norbert was forced to accept the archbishopric of Magdeburg, he took with him Godfried and Otto, that their advice might assist him in matters of great moment. But as Godfried had grown accustomed to solitude, this new sphere soon proved injurious. St. Norbert at this juncture released him from his attendance, that his health might be the sooner restored.

Godfried left Magdeburg for Ilmstadt, where his illness assumed so serious a character that he was persuaded that his end was near at hand. The grief of his brethren at this sad announcement was commensurate only with the joy of the Saint, who longed for nothing so ardently as the sight of the Divine Majesty. He addressed his brother Otto, whose grief was more apparent than that of any one else, in the following terms: "Let us pass this hour in rejoicing, and return thanks to God, who calls us from labor to quiet, from misery to happiness, because no other way leads to our final goal but death." After he had received the Viaticum, he begged pardon of all his brethren for his faults, and then poured out the effusions of his heart to God. At length he turned to his brother once more, and exclaimed: "Dear brother, I hear a voice which says, 'Go to meet him.'" and again: "I see the messenger of my Lord coming to meet me. Oh! how welcome are these messengers of my Creator!" These words were his last; in a moment his pure spirit burst its earthly bonds. The same hour he appeared to his aunt Gerberga, abbess of a convent at Munster, radiant with brilliancy and wearing a golden crown upon his head, evident proofs of the glory upon which he had already entered. A part of his holy body was taken, at a later date, to Kappenberg, where it reposed till the year 1634, when certain heretics destroyed the grave, and scattered the sacred relics to the winds. They shall be reunited on the day of the world's consummation, to the greater glory of God and the endless honor of His servant.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Methinks a serious meditation on the different motives of St. Godfried and the unhappy Frederick would prove useful to a certain	class of men — such persons as strive with inexplicable obstinacy to censure and oppose in every way religious foundations and pious be-
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quests, or to seize upon the goods and revenues which they receive. Godfried, who made these bequests, dies full of happiness, and after his death appears encompassed with glory and majesty. Frederick, who opposed his plans, dies a miserable death; and what would be his appearance, were he permitted by the Lord to show himself to men? Each one may make applications which will be most to his advantage. But let us pass in review some special traits in the life of our saint.

I. St. Godfried resigns his position as general through fear of being held to answer for the faults of others. His conduct was reasonable. A Christian should be careful not only to keep aloof from sin, but also not to render himself answerable for others', especially his inferiors', offences. The Catéchism teaches that this danger is incurred by counselling others to sin, by taking pleasure in their faults, by goading them on, by flattering those who allure the unfortunate, by quietly overlooking their misdeeds—in fine, by not punishing the criminal, or by accepting stolen goods. An accomplice in the sins of others will be bound to answer for them as well as for his own. Witness the murder of Urias, which was ascribed to the Royal Prophet; the passion and crucifixion of our Lord, for which Pilate was held guilty; and the massacre of the Innocents, held to the account of Herod. Examine your heart attentively, lest you may have offended in any of the ways mentioned; and be careful not to fall into such a misfortune for the future. The holy King David was seized with fear on account of his failing on this point, and in this state called upon the Lord: "From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord: and from

those of others spare thy servant" (Ps. xviii. 13, 14).

II. St. Godfried owed his conversion and a life of holiness, to the hearing of God's Word. If you are seriously resolved to lead a devout life and attain eternal happiness, never omit hearing the Word of God on Sundays and holy days. Do not give way to fatigue on any trivial pretext. The Holy Fathers repeatedly declare that it is a sign of future misery to despise the Word of God. Do you not believe their assertion? Listen, then, to the Son of God: "He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not because you are not of God" (John viii. 47). Are not these words sufficiently clear and explicit? Do they need any explanation? And what doctrine have they advanced but that of the Fathers? Should you not tremble if you find, on examination, that you are of that number to whom God's words are wearisome? Unless you repair your past neglect, you bear on your breast the impress of impending ruin. The words of our Lord must leave this impression on your mind, or else you must conclude that He exaggerated, erred, or deceived us. But can you say so without falling into a grievous, lamentable error? I beg you, for your own sake, be eager in listening to God's Word; never lose sight of Christ's declaration: "He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not because you are not of God." He gives the cause of our neglect in the latter words. Many of us excuse ourselves on the ground of lack of time, or our numberless associations; but the fact is that we neither are nor wish to be of God, and, consequently, care little for His Word.

FOURTEENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. HILARY, BISHOP: ST. ILDEPHONSUS, ARCHBISHOP.

St. Hilary, on whom St. Augustine bestows the title of "a distinguished Doctor of the Church" and "an indefatigable champion of Catholic truth," was born in Gaul, of parents renowned for their high rank and great possessions, but unfortunately slaves to the worship of demons. They neglected no opportunity to obtain for their son a thorough instruction and perfection in the polite arts. The reading of different kinds of books, of which none were impious, formed his most frequent and most pleasant entertainment, and eventually paved the way to his profession of the true Faith. For after his marriage, on which he had entered in accordance with the wishes of his parents, he was very eager to know the principles and tenets of Christianity. He afterwards took up the sacred Scriptures, and the more he read the more convinced he became of the deceits of idolatry and of the truth of Christianity. The Lord, who had enlightened the understanding of Hilary with the rays of His grace, moved his will to foster the desire of regeneration in the waters of Baptism. He had but accomplished his designs when he received so thorough an infusion of heavenly science as to defend the Faith against the assaults of idolatry and heresy. From that moment he led so virtuous and edifying a life as to present an example well worthy of imitation to all, and even to those who had been born in the fold of Christ; and after the death of the Bishop of Poitiers, no one was found so deserving of promotion to that See as the new convert. His wife, who had at his instigation embraced the faith, had already died, or, as some writers say, had entered a convent to devote herself wholly to the service of the Lord.

The newly-elected Bishop, aware that the Arian heresy was daily increasing in strength owing to the protection of the Emperor Constantius, employed all his zeal to shield the Catholics from error and confirm them in the Faith. Saturninus, Bishop of Arles, had convoked an assembly of Arian Bishops, whose doctrines he had embraced. Hilary sent in his profession of Faith, in which he combatted the Arian heresy so thoroughly, that the whole assembly broke out into an uproar, and openly denounced his acts. The impious Saturninus went still further; he acquainted the Emperor with the facts, and prevailed on him

to depose the holy Bishop from his seat, and to banish him to Phrygia. The Saint spent four years in exile, to the great advantage, however, of Catholicity; for in twelve doctrinal works on the Most Holy Trinity he demonstrated by irrefragable arguments the truths of our Faith, and victoriously refuted the tenets of Arianism. He afterwards attended the Council at Seleucia, in Isauria, whence he was deputed by the assembled Bishops to the Emperor at Constantinople as bearer of the acts decreed by the Council. On his arrival he asked to hold a conference with the Arians in presence of the Emperor, that his majesty might be convinced of their false doctrines. Ursacius and Valens, two Arian Bishops, through fear of the Saint, frustrated his design; but to get rid of his presence with honor, they persuaded the Emperor to restore the Saint to his See. His reinstatement was received with an outburst of joy by the whole of Gaul. St. Martin, who was afterwards Bishop of Tours, met him on the way, escorted him to the episcopal palace, and remained with him a long time to receive from so distinguished a teacher further light in the Mysteries of the Sacred Text.

He was no sooner re-established in his episcopal authority than he began with renewed fervor to confirm his flock in the true Faith, and to lead them to the summit of Christian holiness. He continued his writings against the Arian heresy and in defence of the true Faith, without dread of the Emperor's anger. He addressed even the latter with apostolic freedom, complained of his conduct as the abettor of the Arians and as the persecutor of the Church, and threatened him with the anger of the just God should he not desist from his impiety. In a word, whenever the Christian Faith was at stake, he proved himself an intrepid advocate of truth. His heroism was enhanced by the practice of numberless other Christian virtues, for which the Lord, by a gentle death, bestowed on him the glorious crown of the valiant warrior, in the year of the Christian era 369. Among other miracles which this illustrious Bishop wrought, the resuscitation of a child, who had died without baptism, is not the least worthy of mention.



St. Ildephonsus, Archbishop of Toledo, was born in that city. His parents, who were of illustrious families, were for a long time childless. Lucia, the pious mother of our Saint, had recourse to the Blessed Virgin, and promised that if she was, through her powerful intercession, favored with a son, she would offer him to the special service of God and of the Queen of

Heaven. Her prayer was granted. Lucia, faithful to her vow, carefully trained her son Ildephonsus, from his most tender years, in the love of God and in devotion to our holy Lady. During twelve years he was instructed by St. Isidore, Bishop of Seville, in the precepts of both worldly and religious science, and chiefly in the wisdom of the Saints. On the expiration of this period he returned home, but remained there only a short time, as he fled secretly to a monastery. Stephen, his father, endeavored to reclaim him by force; but his mother reminded the former of the vow she had made, and thus succeeded in gaining his consent to her son's choice.

In the cloister, the perfection to which Ildephonsus soon reached, marked him out as a worthy successor to the departed abbot; nay, after several years, he was forced to accept the Archbishopric of Toledo on the death of its incumbent. Spite of so dazzling a dignity, his virtues shone forth with all the beauty of the cloister, and with even greater lustre than before. His unquenchable ardor for the honor of the Divine Majesty and of the Virgin Mother was especially remarkable. A sect of heretics in Spain strove to renew the pernicious doctrines of the impious Helvetius, and maintained that Mary had not preserved her virginity. Ildephonsus exposed these falsehoods so fully, not only by his discourses but also by his written works, that he put the heretics to a shameful flight, and gave the Catholics renewed ardor in the honor which they showed to the Immaculate Virgin. We may judge from the following instances of the pleasure given to our glorious Queen by these efforts of love on the part of the holy Archbishop. On the eve preceding the Annunciation of our Lady, the Saint assembled a crowd of people in the church, to prepare them by prayer and hymns of devotion for the worthy celebration of the morrow's feast. On entering the sacred edifice, they were all struck by a dazzling light, which filled the whole church. The eyes of the multitude could not withstand the great brilliancy, and many of those present took flight through fear. But Ildephonsus went without the least hesitation into the church, sank upon his knees, and paid a deep reverence to God. At that moment the happy Saint saw the Blessed Virgin near the pulpit, which it was his custom to use when preaching to his people. His joy was uncontrollable. Mary extended to him a sacerdotal vestment or chasuble, saying, "Because thou hast defended the honor of my virginal purity, take this vestment and wear it on the Feast days of my Son and on mine." As soon as she had finished she vanished from his sight, but leaving behind her a delicious perfume, which filled the entire church. In the mean time the

people who had fled through fear of the dazzling light, returned, and, on entering the church, saw their Archbishop clothed with an unusually precious chasuble. He related to them what had happened. This favor of heaven increased his reputation in the minds of both spiritual and worldly persons, and was to him a further motive for laboring still more zealously in the defence of the Divine Honor and that of Mary. Taught, too, by experience that spiritual reading is productive of untold good to souls, he wrote several excellent books, which, among other things, successfully expounded the Catholic doctrine, and encouraged the faithful in the practice of virtue. After a holy government of his archdiocese for nine years and several months, St. Ildephonsus was called by the Lord to receive, in his sixtieth year, the reward of a life sanctified by virtue.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Some Catholics sneer at all converts, especially such as have forsaken their errors for Truth, as if they were all good for nothing, had become Catholics through temporal considerations, and seldom acted up to their profession. I do not doubt the truth of these remarks when extended to a few only; but to make a general assertion of this kind is contrary to the love we owe God and our neighbor, and to all truth; not to speak of the many instances we have, and witness ourselves, which show us examples of holiness, which should put many persons baptized in their infancy, and brought up in the true religion to the blush; nor of those who give up home and possessions and reduce themselves to complete poverty for the sake of Truth. Was not St. Hilary a convert? Did he not abjure the tenets of idolatry to embrace the Faith like so many others whom we shall mention in these pages? You cannot but admit the fact. But let me question you further. Did Hilary pursue this course through mere temporal considerations? Did he lead a life unbecom-

ing a Christian? Be false to your heart if you can. I might repeat these questions regarding numberless others, whose lives we shall endeavor to trace. Your assertions, given above, will hold good for none of these persons. I could show what little truth there is in what you say by an examination of many other instances. How shameful and wicked is it not, to make these assertions of converts! Remember that on the day of judgment many will be the converts who will enter heaven, and many, too, will be the Catholics, baptized at an infant age, who will be precipitated into the abyss of hell. "I say to you," says Jesus Christ Himself, "that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. viii. 11, 12).

II. St. Ildephonsus wrote several books of piety for the encouragement of the faithful, and their progress in virtue, well aware of the

immense advantage accruing from the perusal of such works. The conversion and sanctification of St. Hilary had taken root from the seeds sown in his heart by the reading of Holy Scripture and other Catholic books. It is not your province to write spiritual books, but it is your duty to read them attentively. Indeed there is nothing which so closely approaches the hearing of sermons in its advantage to souls as the perusal of pious books, just as nothing is so injurious as a love for impious trash. Beware of these latter; they have been to numbers of souls the occasions whereby devotions became insipid, the fear of the Lord was lost, and Faith extinguished. They lead

to the commission of the gravest crimes, and to the bottomless pit of hell. The ruin of many may be traced to the reading of these books, as spiritual reading laid the foundation of St. Hilary's sanctity. Resolve, then, to spend a quarter or half an hour on Sundays and Feast days, at least, in the reading of a spiritual book. Perhaps your fate for all eternity depends on this exercise. "My brother," writes St. Ephrem, "neglect not thy soul. Read spiritual books for the enlightenment of thy understanding, and the perfection of thy soul." Read good Catholic books attentively, and zealously propagate and spread them far and wide.

FIFTEENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. PAUL, HERMIT.

St. Paul, the first hermit or monk in Egypt, was born about the year 230, in lower Thebais. He was scarcely fourteen or fifteen years old when he lost both of his parents. About this time a violent persecution was opened against the Christians by the Emperors Decius and Valerian. Paul, distrustful of himself and dreading the cruel torments to which the Christians were subjected, fled to the house of his married sister. His brother-in-law, however, who was a heathen, had made up his mind to give information of the religion which Paul professed, to possess himself of his entire inheritance; for he well knew that informers were rewarded with, if not all the possessions of the accused, at least with the greater part. But Paul heard of his design, and, secretly leaving the house, hid himself in the woods, where he determined to remain till the close of the persecution. But Divine Providence had other views. Paul penetrated into the forest and went from one place to another, stopping now in this spot now in another, until he at last found a huge rock overhanging a deep cave, whose mouth was closed up with a stone. He removed the stone, entered, penetrated it farther and farther, and at last came upon an open space beneath the blue

firmament, and shaded by the branches of a palm-tree. The spot was refreshed by a crystal spring of the sweetest water, which grew into a little brook, and after a few steps was again absorbed by the earth. This was an agreeable discovery for the youth, who at once felt that it was designed by God as his future abode. He accordingly resolved to spend the rest of his days in the service of God and the forgetfulness of earthly vanities. He kept his resolution, and there ended his life, the whole of which he passed in prayer, thanksgiving, meditation on the heavenly mysteries and other exercises of piety. At first he fed on the fruit of the palm tree, but when this was exhausted the Lord sent him a raven with half a loaf of bread every day, thus providing him with necessaries as he had the Prophet Elias; the clear water of the spring was his beverage, and the leaves of the palm-tree furnished him with material for clothing.

In his one hundred and thirteenth year he was visited by St. Antony, who lived in another desert, and was then ninety years old; the cause of his visit was the following: St. Antony once had the thought that there was no hermit in the whole desert, who could compare with himself in perfection. But in his sleep he was shown the contrary, and instructed to repair on the morrow to a monk, who was far more perfect. The Saint, bending under the weight of ninety years, set out on his journey the next morning, trusting that the Lord would conduct him to the cell of him whom he had been commissioned by the Divine command to visit. His hopes were soon gratified; for after traversing the wilderness for two days and two nights, he saw on the third day a she-wolf which fled into a mountain cavern. He followed her, looked into the cave, entered and proceeded very slowly, and at last saw a light in the distance. St. Paul, who dwelt in this cave, and heard the noise of approaching steps, quickly closed the door and secured it from within. Antony, now more assured that he had at last found the object of his search, knocked at the door and called out until the aged hermit gave him admittance. The two Saints had no sooner looked at each other than they called one another by their proper names, fell upon one another's neck, and linked in a most tender embrace, returned ardent thanks to God. They then sat down, when St. Paul addressed St. Antony; "Behold, here is he whom you so ardently longed to see. You see here a man, who shall soon fall into dust and ashes." He then eagerly inquired into the state of the persecution, into the numerical strength of the pagans, and the like points. Antony answered his questions as well as he could. While they were speaking, the raven flew into the cave, this time not with half, as before, but with a whole

loaf. At this sight St. Paul spoke: "See the goodness and liberality of the Lord in sending us our meal. Sixty years long have I received half a loaf for my daily allowance; but your arrival has induced the Lord to double this meal." The Saints thanked God for the food which He had sent them, and, after sharing their meal, they returned to prayer, which they continued during the whole night, and interrupted only with hymns of praise and spiritual conversation. At daybreak, Paul said to Antony: "It has long been my desire that you should dwell in this part of the desert; but, the hour of my dissolution being at hand, you have been sent by the Lord to bury my body." Antony wept bitterly at this announcement, and begged the holy hermit to take him as his companion in the voyage of eternity; "it is God's will," answered Paul, "that you should live many days longer for the good of those whom you instruct in the way of perfection." He then asked Antony to bring him the cloak, which he had received from St. Athanasius, that it might cover his lifeless body: this request was suggested by his charity, which could not view the sadness of Antony, should he be present at his death.

Antony hastened back to his own cloister to procure the cloak. His brethren asked him where he had been so long a time. "Woe is me, a poor sinner," answered the aged recluse, "who am not worthy to bear the name of a monk. I have seen Elias; I have seen John in the wilderness; I have seen Paul in paradise." He said no more, but, taking the cloak, hastened on his return to the cave of St. Paul. But, before he reached his destination, he saw the soul of this illustrious servant of God encompassed by a brilliant light and borne to Heaven by angels with an escort of Prophets and Apostles. Amazed at this sight, Antony burst into tears and cried aloud: "Alas! dearest father, why hast thou forsaken me? Have I then learned to know thee so late, only that I should again lose thee so soon." When he had given free course to his sighs and tears, he pursued his journey to the cell of St. Paul, entered and found the body of the holy hermit in a kneeling and immovable posture, the head uplifted and the hands extended towards heaven. Antony at first thought that he was not dead but was merely in an ecstasy; but when he discovered that life was really extinct, the tears streamed copiously from his eyes. He was, however, soon consoled, and by the Divine direction, folding the cloak around the corpse, bore it out of the cave. But now his great anxiety was how and where he should dig the grave; at that moment his quiet was restored by the arrival of two lions from the depths of the wood; these beasts at first lay at the feet of the corpse, where they poured out

their lamentations, and then scraped the earth until they had made a hole sufficient to contain the body. Antony at once, with prayer and the singing of psalms, deposited the remains of his brother hermit in the grave thus miraculously dug. He then returned home, taking with him the coat of palm-leaves made by St. Paul, and wore it on the greatest solemnities of the year, viz., at Easter and on Pentecost day. St. Paul was freed from the bonds of the flesh in the year 343 of the Christian Era, and the one hundred and thirteenth of his age; so we learn from the writings of St. Jerome.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Spite of the severe austerities practiced by St. Paul from his youth, some fruit or a little bread and water having been his only nourishment, he attained the good old age of one hundred and thirteen. We saw on the eleventh of this month that St. Theodosius, despite his rigorous fasts, lived till the age of one hundred and five. To-morrow we shall relate the same wonderful fact of St. Antony. But do you remember having read of any one, who had despised fasting and had filled his body with viands, and was blessed with a venerable age? Probably not; see, then, how mistaken you are in supposing that the observance of the fasts and abstinence ordained by the Church will enfeeble you or ruin your health. Holy Writ tells us: "He that is temperate, shall prolong life" (Eccles. xxxviii. 34); that is, those who are moderate in eating and drinking. This assurance should suffice to convince you of your error; but to leave you no excuse the Lord has confirmed his assertion by presenting you with numberless instances of Saints who, by rigorous fasts, lived much longer than those who refused to fast or abstain on the ground that it would be injurious to their health, or shorten their lives. They deceived

themselves and would deceive you. They give the lie to the express declaration of the spirit of Truth. Judge then whether you should give credit to their misrepresentations or to the words of the Holy Spirit.

II. St. Paul retired to the desert with the intention of remaining only for some time; feeling however, the advantage of solitude, he found in it greater sweetness than in all the joy, possessions and honors of the world. Perhaps you imagine that there is nothing more fatiguing than the service of God. But you err grievously, and you will be convinced of your mistake by seriously entering upon this service. "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet," exclaims the Psalmist. "Blessed is the man that hopeth in Him." St. Augustine, who had experience of this consolation, says: "O how delightful it is to have been separated from those empty pleasures; that which I formerly feared to lose, I now rejoice in not possessing." A sincere confession, which is made with weeping and repentance over past sins, is a soothing balm to the soul, and a source of unspeakable joy. "Many fly confession," says St. Bernard to his brethren, "because they regard only its cross, not its gentle unction. But you, whom experience has

taught, know that our cross is anointed, and through the favor of the Holy Ghost is our joy and our consolation. Our penance has, so to speak, the sweetest bitterness." They, therefore, are pronounced happy and promised abundant consolation, who weep for their sins. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matt. v. 5). Nay, they are consoled even here below. Tell me, whenever you

made a sincere confession and resolved to amend your life, did you not then feel penetrated with a greater joy than when wallowing in the mire of worldly pleasures or of sin and crime. "If we endeavor to be pious and virtuous, nothing can sadden us," says St. Chrysostom. "The joy we seek not in creatures, but in the Creator," says St. Bernard, "is a true joy, coming from God."

THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. JOHN CALIBITA, CONFESSOR.

A spectacle as rare as it is pleasing in the sight of God and His Angels, is presented to us in the life of St. John, surnamed Calibita. His father, Eutropius, was a Roman Senator, while Theodora, his mother, was a lady of distinction. He was still a mere child when he already indicated a tendency to piety and devotion as well as bright promise of attaining the learning and knowledge befitting his rank and station. With his years, it may justly be said, grew the wonder at his sweet virtues and bright talents. It happened that a sainted man, a monk, on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and other sacred places, once entered his father's house for food and shelter. John was completely charmed with his religious deportment and pious conversation; he took him aside and inquired of him in private about his character and mode of life. The man of God gave him a sincere account, and John thereupon felt himself inflamed with a burning desire of following him on his pilgrimage and embracing his manner of religious life. To accomplish this pious design, he requested the monk on his return from the holy land to pass through Rome and aid him to carry out his holy determination. In the interval John labored by fervent prayers to recommend his resolution to God, while his parents, at his request, furnished him with the New Testament. In this holy book the youth daily studied those lessons which Christ had formerly imparted to his hearers and which now strengthened and matured our Saint's intention. When, after a few months, the monk returned to Rome, John did not delay, but, secretly and without the knowledge of his parents,

he departed with the Religious, and safely arrived at the monastery. The Superior of the cloister hesitated long before he would receive John among the number of his subjects, for he greatly feared that he would not be able to endure the austerities of his Order; but when he saw the earnestness and fervor of the pious youth, and having been importuned by many entreaties and tears, he consented to receive him among his spiritual children. For six years John led a life so perfect and exemplary as to excite the oldest amongst the Religious to admiration and imitation. But the evil Spirit now began to tempt him in the most violent manner, and day and night disturbed his peace of mind. He placed before his eyes vivid pictures of the grief afflicting his sorrowing parents on account of his secret flight, and painted in rainbow hues the great honors and riches which he had abandoned, as well as the sensual pleasures which he might have enjoyed. By means like these the Evil One endeavored to make him disgusted with cloister life and entice him back to his father's roof. True, John would have recourse to prayer and fasting, and with all the will and determination of his character resist the temptations, but his peace was fled. Finally God inspired him with the holy thought of returning to his father's house, but in order to achieve a more glorious and complete victory over self, he intimated to him the idea of living a hidden life there after the example of St. Alexius. He disclosed his intention to the abbot, and with his approbation of his design, he left the monastery and returned to Rome. On the way to the city he exchanged his habit for a beggar's poor clothes, and but miserably covered with a threadbare cloak he wended his way to his father's palace. It was evening when he reached the gate of the well-known mansion, but instead of asking admittance, he spent the night in continued prayer.

At break of day, as the janitor unlocked the door, he met John in the guise of a wretched beggar sitting in a corner of the portico, and was about to drive him away. But the Saint fell at his feet and with many tears begged of him permission to stay, promising at the same time not to prove the least burden to the meanest in the house. God softened the heart of the janitor to pity and compassion, and his request was granted. A few days had elapsed when the lady of the house, John's mother, accompanied by a large and brilliant retinue, passed out, but as soon as she saw the pitiable beggar, she flew into a passion and would not suffer him to remain an instant. The servants too rebuked and reviled him in the most outrageous terms, and were on the point of chasing him from his retreat. But John, without the least sign of fear, again besought the porter with many tears

to assign him some unfrequented spot in the palace where he might live in silence and seclusion. God caused the heart of the porter to melt with pity a second time; he listened to the prayer of the despised and maltreated beggar, and constructed a little hut to serve as his lodging. It would be impossible to narrate all the injuries which the Saint suffered at the hands of some impudent and capricious servants; still there were many who admired his holy life. Once while seated at the table, these acquainted their master how the humble Saint spent nearly the whole day in the Church, prayed the greater part of every night, lived on bread and water, and gave on all occasions an example of perfect submission and patience. Eutropius, at this recital, began to feel compassionate, and gave orders that meats from his own table should be carried to the beggar. The order was obeyed, still John reserved none for himself, but distributed all his gifts to the poor. In this manner did the Saint conquer himself and heroically despise the goods of this world, so that even at the end of three years he was unknown in his father's house.

God sent an angel to him to announce the tidings that he would die within three days. John, overjoyed at the warning, received the Holy Sacraments in the church, and on the last day called the porter to his bedside. He first thanked him in a most touching manner for all the benefits which he had received through his goodness and compassion, and then begged him to make known to the mistress of the palace that, as he had, an important disclosure to make, she might condescend to pay him a visit. The noble lady was incensed at the insolent request, as she deemed it, and gave the janitor a positive refusal. But John sent word to her a second time, adding she might deign to come, because he had something very agreeable to communicate to her before he died. Still Theodora refused again, until finally, at the persuasion of her husband, Eutropius, she went to see the beggar. John expressed his gratitude for her many kindnesses and benefits, and requested her to bury his body on the spot where he then lay, and dressed in those humble garments which he then wore. Theodora, the mistress, promised on oath that she would see his request fulfilled. He then presented her with the New Testament, the book which he had once received from his mother, and said: "Accept this token of remembrance; keep it as a precious treasure, and as a strong shield against every temptation." The mother received the book, and began to think how much it resembled the one which she had once presented to her son. She hastened to inform Eutropius, who immediately recognized it as the identical book. Hereupon both hurried to John, now

lying at the door of death, and they conjured him to make known to them when and where he had obtained that book. The dying Saint at first refused to listen to their petition, but, at their urgent entreaties and supplications, he said to them, in a broken voice: "I am your son John. The book is your gift to me. Out of it have I learned how to care for my soul, and to lead, for Christ's sake, a life so severe and despised."

The parents stood rooted to the spot; they gazed at one another, but they could not utter a word. From this embarrassment and secret anguish they were freed by floods of tears springing from their eyes; they fell in a parental embrace on the neck of John, and imprinted kisses of heartfelt affection on his furrowed brow. But the soul of the Saint, filled with the sweetest consolation and joy, sped, victorious and free, to the heavenly mansions of bliss. It is needless to mention in what lamentations the parents indulged on this occasion, how afflicted they were at his loss, and how long they wept for the ill-treatment and cruelty exercised towards their own child. When Theodora had given free vent to abundant tears and satisfied her sorrow, she remembered not her given promise, and, divesting her son of his beggarly garments, was about to lay him out and bury him after a manner and fashion suited to his birth and station; but a succeeding swoon instantly reminded her of her pledged word; and accordingly she gave orders that the body of the deceased, draped in its former habiliments, and in such garments as the Saint had prescribed, should be entombed in the spot which, by his fasting, prayer, and other virtuous and pious works, he had sanctified and consecrated like a Church. Not long after, the parents erected a splendid church over his grave, distributed their large possessions among the poor, and led, unto the end of their earthly career, lives of approved holiness and justice.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. It was by nothing less than a heroic victory over self that St. John, for salvation's sake, secretly leaving his father's house, separating himself from his parents and kindred, and foregoing all the pleasures and conveniences of earth and time, buried himself in the obscurity of a cloister. But still greater was his triumph, and more astounding his heroism, when, under the despised

and concealed guise of a beggar, he re-entered his parental palace, and, unknown to the world and his own relatives, he persevered to the end of his life in the patient endurance of insults and indignities suffered from the servants of the house. I do not, indeed, desire and request you to quit your home, parents, and acquaintances, except God should call you to enter Religion or to the state of

Holy Orders ; but God commands you to abandon those persons and avoid those occasions that might lead you to commit sin and crime, and hurry you to perdition. He enjoins you to abstain from all sinful pleasures, not to be too much addicted even to such as are innocent and permitted, nor to hanker after an immoderate enjoyment of the same ; for a voluptuous and a sensual life is not a Christian life—one leading to eternal happiness. Nay, God desires that you bear it with patience, if those beneath you and in a lower station and office cause you trouble and annoyance ; it is His precept that you persevere in good works unto the end, and do not change and vacillate in your behavior and service towards Him. And therefore I ask : Will you obey God's commands or not ?

II. Consider that it was by the reading of the Holy Gospel that John learned how to insure his salvation. But he was not satisfied with merely learning these soul-saving lessons, but he reduced them to practice by regulating his life in perfect accordance with these truths and doctrines. It does not suffice, therefore, to read the Gospel and other spiritual books ; but you must especially gather therefrom what to perform and what to omit in order to be saved. Mark this well : that

unless you model your life after the example set before you, or the lesson taught and the doctrine inculcated, neither the reading of good books nor the study of truth will tend to your eternal welfare. It should be your endeavor to assist in the same spirit at the preaching of the Word of God—not merely to listen to it ; but to regulate your life and manners according to the same, will be a profit and a gain. “ Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only,” St. James admonishes you (James chap. i.).

Those who are attentive to this maxim and advice will make it a point to gather from every sermon and reading some practical application for their present needs, and will strive to obtain some fruit and advantage, according as circumstances may dispose and the situation may require. This method of assisting at the Word of God when read in a pious book or given forth by the mouth of His minister, is of incalculable advantage. For this reason, too, did Christ pronounce blessed not only them that hear His word, but also and especially them that keep it and order their life agreeably to its precepts. For “ Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep the same ” (Matthew chap. v.).

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. ANTHONY, ABBOT AND HERMIT.

St. Anthony, the great Father and Instructor of monks and hermits, whose life was written by St. Athanasius, doctor of the Church, was born of noble and wealthy parents at Coma, a small town of Egypt, about the middle of the third century. When still a youth, he one day heard the words of the Gospel : “ If

thou wilt be perfect, go sell all thou hast and give it to the poor, then come and follow me."

This counsel of Christ impressed him so deeply, that immediately on his return home he divided the immense estate of his deceased parents into two portions; of these he laid one aside for his sister, but the other half, his own share, he distributed among the poor, and resolved, at the same time, to follow Christ in the practice of voluntary poverty as closely as possible. He withdrew into solitude and became the pupil of a very renowned servant of God, in order that he might acquire the science of serving God in the most perfect manner. As soon as he had comprehended and fully learned the precepts of a 'spiritual life, he separated himself from his instructor and director in perfection, and, having chosen a dreaded mountain cave for his abode, he began to lead a secluded life and to practice every virtue. Above all, he devoted himself to prayer and mortification; to the former exercise he consecrated not only many hours during the day, but even during the night. It was observed that often, at sunset, he would begin a prayer on bended knees, and at sunrise he was still found in the same posture, absorbed in devotion. The time consumed in holy contemplation on these occasions appeared to him so short, that sometimes he complained about the sunlight which fell in streams upon him on the next morrow for disturbing him in his prayer and meditation. He was especially attentive to interior self-denial as well as to exterior mortification. On this account he never uttered a complaint about the excessive cold of winter or the intense heat of summer; he never shortened nor omitted his prayer in consequence, but he accepted and bore with joy the inclemencies of the seasons, and the hardships to which his austere life gave rise, as so many occasions of conquering self and chastising his body. His food was coarse bread sprinkled with salt, and water his only drink; but he would not partake of either until evening was come. Nay, sometimes he would abstain for two or three days from all nourishment; his whole life, in short, was one continued fast. He took his repose on the bare ground, and clothed himself in rough sackcloth.

The Evil Spirit looked with a jealous eye on the holy fervor of the youth, and, that he might check him in his career and cause him to return to the world, he began to assail him with the most violent temptations. He placed before him the great possessions which he had abandoned, and the pleasures which could be enjoyed out of seclusion, together with the many labors, fatigues, and difficulties of the life upon which he had entered, and which a young man of his strength and frame of body would

never be able to endure. Satan, in the next place, suggested to him the most detestable of impure thoughts, and filled his mind with unholy imaginings, harassing and torturing the innocent youth incessantly both day and night. Still Anthony remained undisturbed, and courageously resisted the enemy of his soul. To the first temptation he opposed the consideration of death, and from the second he escaped undefiled by meditating on the pains of hell. In a similar manner did he worst the Evil One when he was incited to pride; he humbled himself before God, reposed his confidence in him, and showed his supreme contempt of the enemy of salvation. No sooner did he awake in the morning than he equipped himself for a new struggle, invoked the assistance of God for the coming day in those words of the Prophet Elias: "As the Lord liveth, in whose presence I now stand."

To increase the merits of His servant, God gave Satan, as he had permitted on a former occasion in the case of holy Job, power over his body; and St. Athanasius relates that the infernal spirits attacked and maltreated him so cruelly that when left more dead than alive by them, he was carried into the neighboring village in order to have his wounds dressed; but as soon as they were healed he returned to the cave, for which the Evil Spirit had wished to create a disgust in him by the aforesaid cruelties and dangers.

Soon another mode of warfare was attempted by the Evil Spirits against the Saint. Assuming the forms of lions, bears, wolves, serpents, dragons, and other horrid and dreaded shapes, the wicked and spiteful spirits endeavored to intimidate him and to chase him from his abode. But he stood unmoved, and, raising his eyes to heaven, signed himself with the sign of the cross, and mocked the spirits of hell in these words: "If God has given you power over me, set upon me and do with me as you will; but if you have no power, depart, for you will not be able to prevail against me." Shortly after this trial, Christ the Lord appeared to His brave and valiant champion. At sight of Him the Saint cried out, "Kindest Jesus! where hast Thou been so long? Why dost Thou abandon me?" "I have not abandoned thee," responded the Lord; "I was at thy side the whole time, and witnessed with joy thy combat and triumph; but be consoled, for henceforth the powers of hell shall not afflict thee." Anthony was greatly solaced, and humbly thanked his Redeemer for His aid and goodness; and to be further removed from men and to serve God more peacefully, he retired into deeper solitude. But the precaution was useless, for the fame of his saintly life had spread far and wide, and many arrived from

distant cities and countries in order to place themselves under his direction. Everywhere, close by the dwelling of the Saint, cells were built, and when Anthony saw that the number of these was daily increased, instructed by a divine revelation, he distributed them into different communities, which he visited at stated times and schooled in the practices of a spiritual life. Hence, too, he is justly styled the Author and Founder of spiritual assemblies and congregations. One thing is certain, that within the period of ten years the entire desert of the Thebais was filled with monasteries, all crowded with Cenobites, who, in the beginning, were ruled and directed by St. Anthony ; but subsequently each cloister was provided with its own special Superior.

St. Athanasius gives a detailed and circumstantial account of the salutary lessons which St. Anthony imparted to his subjects. Some of these are the following : First, nothing is more useful to a Religious than daily to make this reflection : To-day only do I begin to serve God, and the present day may be the last of my life. Secondly, the Evil Spirit dreads nothing so much as fasting and prayer, watching and voluntary poverty, charity to our neighbor and humility, but especially an ardent love for Christ our Lord. Thirdly, a pure life and a lively faith in God's presence are the fittest means to defeat the enemy of our soul. Fourthly, there is no better remedy against tepidity, than frequently to call to mind the shortness of life and the uncertainty of its end. Fifthly, Satan hates all Christians, but virgins and religious persons he detests in a particular manner. Sixthly, by diffidence of one's own strength and confidence in God, temptations are easily conquered. And, finally, do not curiously explore the hidden future, but leave the disposition of all things to Divine Providence.

Such are a few of the wise maxims which the spiritually-minded abbot communicated to the Religious subjected to his rule, and which, by being carefully observed, advanced all to the highest stage of perfection. He himself encouraged all by his powerful example, and was a perfect and finished model of all virtues. Though God had bestowed extraordinary gifts upon him, as a mastery over the evil spirits, a foreknowledge of future events, and power and virtue to cure the diseased, his humility was so proportionally great, that he fled from even the shadow of vainglory. He was ever eager to learn and practice whatever virtuous or praiseworthy quality and deed he observed in others ; and while he ever cherished the highest esteem for others, himself alone did he despise. In beholding St. Paul, and reflecting upon his life, precious before God, he believed himself unworthy to be called a monk. Notwithstanding this contempt

and low estimate of himself, he proved, however, courageous and fearless when God's honor or the interests of the true Faith were in question. He would by letter remind Bishops of their duty, and admonish princes and nobles, who greatly esteemed him, to better their lives. Gifted with a wonderful wisdom and prudence, he, on various occasions, powerfully defended the Faith against the Arians, and convinced them of their errors; the faithful he exhorted to perseverance, and those that were martyred at Alexandria he encouraged by his flaming words to patience unto the end.

Want of space does not permit us to enlarge on the virtues of St. Anthony; but let a few words about his last days suffice. Anthony was one hundred and five years old, of which he had spent eighty-five or ninety in solitude, in the exercise of every austerity, when God revealed to him his approaching death. The Saint cheerfully prepared himself for the hour of dissolution, and then gave his parting instructions to his disciples. Among other precepts and good counsels, he uttered these admonitory words: "God invites me to Himself, and I desire to go to heaven. Remember my lessons, and imagine to yourselves that only now you begin your spiritual career, and you will be steadfast and persevering in your good resolution. Shun the poison of apostates and heretics, and carefully observe the commandments of God; live as if you had to die daily, and preserve your souls pure and free from all improper thoughts." He finally begged them to bury his body without pomp and splendor, and not to reveal to any one the place of his burial. Thereupon he raised his eyes joyfully to heaven, and, beholding a host of angels, who were sent by God to accompany his soul on her flight to heaven, he ceased to live on earth, that he might live for ever in a blissful eternity.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Anthony was wont to begin his prayer in the evening, and continue the same all night, nevertheless, he would complain because the rising sun on the next day interrupted him in his meditation and communion with God. He never omitted it, nor even shortened it, on account of winter's cold and frost or the summer's heats. But what do you do in com-

parison with him? Perhaps you fall asleep over your evening prayer, or neglect it altogether. To pray and contemplate is always too long and troublesome a task for you. Should your confessor enjoin, by way of penance for your faults, a half hour of prayer, or to spend one night in meditation, you would not cease grumbling and complaining. You would say, without doubt, that

it would be impossible for you to perform such a penance, owing to the duration and the time during which it was to be performed. You would plead sickness, and ask to enjoy your usual amount of repose. And still you were able once, and, it may be, you are able even now, to waste whole nights in carousals and feasts, at entertainments, at the play and the dance! This was quite possible and easily endured by you. You never found it too long or tedious; you never missed your rest, nor felt sick in consequence. Ah! you only object when prayer is required of you, but with what reason and justice? Surely not because God has bestowed strength of body upon you in order that you may waste it in airy nothings, but rather to work out your salvation. Besides, St. Anthony never let the cold of winter or the heat of summer be a pretext for omitting his devotions, or even curtailing them; but how do you act? When winter is come, it is a rare thing to meet you assisting at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on a week day; and on Sundays and holy days you sedulously avoid listening to a sermon or spending some little time in pious, devotional practices. And why this? Oh! it is too excessively cold, you say; you are afraid of a catarrh, although you never even dream of these evils when some exhibition or public pageant is to be seen, or a sleigh-ride is proposed, a display of pyrotechnics, a gorgeous procession, or other similar pleasures and delights are to be enjoyed. No cold could hold you back, no circumstances could alter your desire of assisting at such sports and entertainments. But how does this conduct harmonize with your behavior towards God? and do you imagine that your worthless ex-

cuses will find a hearing and satisfy the justice of a righteous God? Reflect on this, and repent of your faults. You must resolve in future to cultivate a love for prayer, and never to omit the same at appointed times. Do not be so easily turned from your purpose of assisting at Mass and hearing the Word of God, because the season is cold and unfavorable; be convinced that you can endure much more than you imagine. In proof of this, you need but make the trial.

II. St. Anthony fought bravely against the evil spirits, and combatted strenuously against every temptation. Have recourse to the weapons he used, and employ them as he did. Observe especially in what manner he prepared himself for the daily struggle; how he renewed every morning the intention of serving God faithfully, and how humbly he begged for His Divine assistance. In this respect I beseech you to imitate his earnest endeavors and powerful example. Do not, therefore, omit to renew this purpose and resolve: To-day I will serve God with all the fervor of my spirit; I will not offend Him, and I will carefully avoid every sin, particularly this or that sin. This day I will say my prayers with fervor and devotion; I will conduct myself with respect at church, and cultivate the virtue of patience in my labors and sufferings. Nothing is more useful than to accustom one's self to resolutions of this nature, especially early in the morning, and before every undertaking. Try it, and be persuaded of its salutary effects; but remember that in making these resolves you must beg God for His grace and assistance. Say, therefore, as it is written in the Book of Esdras (2 Esdras, chap. i.), "Lord, direct thy servant this day;" or pray,

with Holy Church: "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to preserve me this day from every sin" (Ambrose); or, again, with holy Judith, "Strengthen me,	O Lord God, at this hour" (Judith, chap. xiii.); or, finally, "Lord, stand by me to-day; come to my assistance."
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EIGHTEENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. PRISCA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR, AND THE BOY-MARTYR, POTITUS.

Among the many thousand martyrs whom the Catholic Church venerates throughout the year, those especially claim our admiration who, even in their tender childhood, suffered the most cruel tortures, but still showed themselves as courageous and fearless as others who had attained the prime of life and mature manhood. By their deaths God has clearly manifested the truth of His holy religion; for, being so young and naturally weak, they would not have been able to endure the most shocking cruelties and barbarities with a patience so unconquerable and a spirit so undaunted, unless God, the author of faith, had imparted to them His own peculiar aid and strength. In the number of these heroic martyrs St. Prisca and St. Potitus are justly placed. We shall only recount a few facts of their illustrious combats. The Emperor Claudius had ordered a public feast in honor of the gods, in order to give thanks to them for the many victories which, as the blind heathen supposed, he had gained through their assistance. All the inhabitants of the city were commanded, under pain of death, to assist at the sacrifice which he would offer on the appointed day. The Christians who lived in the city and did not comply with the order were arrested, and put to death in the most cruel manner. One of the most distinguished among them was St. Prisca. The Emperor, before whom she was accused of being a Christian, gave orders that she should be led to the temple of Apollo and be forced to offer sacrifice to the idol. But Prisca resolutely refused, saying, "I am a Christian. The God of Christians alone deserves my homage. Your gods are no gods at all, but devils." These words were received as a slander and blasphemy, and the executioners thereupon struck the Christian maiden so cruelly in the face that her countenance was entirely deformed, and the blood streamed from her mouth and nostrils. In this condition she was thrown into prison, where she was encouraged by her heavenly spouse boldly to undergo the many sufferings that still awaited her.

Soon afterwards she was again summoned to appear before the tyrant, and, confessing Christ as fearlessly as before, she successively endured the most frightful tortures. In the first place, she was most cruelly scourged, and, after having seething oil poured over her wounded body, she was cast into prison and endured the pangs of hunger for three days and three nights. Next she was thrown before an enraged lion, but as the beast did not harm her in the least, she was returned to the dungeon and made to starve for another period of three days. After this she was stretched on the rack and torn with iron hooks and combs; but amid all her sufferings the Christian heroine ever displayed the same undaunted courage, exclaiming: "I am a Christian, and I am prepared cheerfully rather to undergo every imaginable torture than forsake Christ." Being cast upon a burning pyre, she remained unscathed, and praised God in the midst of the flames. These evident wonders, which God wrought in favor of the holy virgin, the tyrant ascribed to magic; and that he might not seem to have been frustrated, he gave orders that her head be struck off. The command was forthwith executed. This martyrdom occurred in the year of our Lord 170. At the moment of her decapitation, a voice from on high was heard, saying, "Come, enter the Kingdom of Heaven, because thou hast combated bravely for My name."



An almost similar struggle was undergone by a boy of thirteen years, whose feast is celebrated on the thirteenth day of this month. He was born in Sardinia, of very rich though pagan parents; but by a special favor of God he attained to a knowledge of Christian truth in his earliest years, and had the grace of maintaining the same with wonderful heroism to the hour of his death. As soon as his father, called Hilus, observed that Potitus, his son, was a Christian, he endeavored by every means in his power to induce him to resume the worship of idols. Potitus, however, remained unshaken in his faith, and because God had conferred on him the power of working miracles, he converted many to the Catholic religion, and among others, as some maintain, his own father. The Emperor Antoninus had a daughter who was possessed and tortured by the evil spirit. He invoked the aid of his false gods, and promised great sacrifices and offerings in their honor if they should liberate his child from this lamentable affliction. But the evil spirit, compelled to speak by the power of God, said: "Unless Potitus come, I will not depart." Potitus was sought after and brought in. The Em-

peror said to him, "I have heard many wonderful things about thee; wilt thou venture to cure my child?" To this request Potitus answered: "Why do not thy gods restore her health and free her from the evil spirits?" The Emperor became confused and blushed at the question; nevertheless he besought the holy Boy to effect what his gods were unable to accomplish. The young Christian inquired of the Emperor a second time, "Wilt thou believe in the God whom I adore if I cure thy daughter?" The Emperor gave his promise, but he wished to deceive the holy Child. The daughter was now led into the Saint's presence. Potitus commanded the evil spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, to depart from the girl, and in the same instant she was left in peace. Those that were present were astonished at the sudden cure, and cried out, with a loud voice: "Truly, the God of the Christians is a great and a mighty God." The ungrateful and wicked Emperor alone ascribed the wonder to the art of magic and to witchcraft, as was then the universal opinion among the pagans concerning the miracles wrought by the Christians, and he ordered Potitus to offer sacrifice to the gods of the Empire; but as he refused to comply, he had him beaten most cruelly and thrown into prison, where he expected him to perish from the inflicted wounds and the pangs of hunger. God, however, sent an angel to him to heal his wounds and allay his hunger by suitable nourishment.

The Emperor, informed that Potitus was still alive, surrounded by a great multitude of people, sat in judgment, and caused the Boy, who persevered unshaken in the confession of his faith, to endure every mode of torture. He was stretched on the rack, had his sides burned with lighted torches, was shredded with iron hooks, and thrown as prey to the wild beasts. The holy Child rejoiced in his sufferings, and remained untouched by the furious animals. After this he addressed the tyrant in these words: "What sayest thou, O Cæsar, to these wonders? Hast thou not yet experienced sufficiently the might and power of my Lord, Jesus Christ?" But the Emperor, still more enraged, gave orders that the Confessor of Christ should be thrown into a vessel filled with seething oil, and that molten lead be poured upon him. Still, as he did not manifest the least suffering, but, on the contrary, praised God with a jubilant voice, the Emperor bade the torturers drive a red-hot nail into his head. But, lo! in the very same moment the tyrant felt a most agonizing pain in his head, and he was of opinion that the aforesaid spike, of a white heat, was piercing his own brain. Accordingly he made the most violent contortions and gestures, exclaiming, "Servant of God, have pity on me, and free me from this intoler-

able suffering by praying to your powerful Lord." The Servant of God prayed for the howling wretch, and instantly the Emperor was eased of every torture. The infatuated tyrant, however, paid no attention to the wonder, which he ascribed to false gods, and endeavored again to force the young martyr to deny the true faith. The Saint then reproached him with ingratitude and voluntary obduracy, but he received no other reward than to have his eyes plucked out, his tongue cut off, and finally to have his head struck off. If any there be to whom the wonders narrated in this and in the preceding life seem incredible, let them call to mind what we said in the preface, and let them reflect that God bestowed on tender youth such astonishing courage and strength, and performed through them so many signs and wonders, in order that His power as well as the truth of the Christian faith might be more clearly manifested to the pagans, and that they might thereby see the errors and follies of their own religion.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Potitus was a convert, because from paganism he was led to embrace Christianity. The same can in all probability be said of St. Prisca, although it is not expressly stated so in her life. But both Saints had to endure much persecution and suffering on account of the true faith. Had they chosen to remain in the darkness of paganism, or to return to the same, they would not only have been sheltered against every attack and danger from without, but riches, moreover, and honors and pleasures would have been their constant portion. Even this is the case in our own days. Neophytes have often to suffer evils and wrongs at the hands of Non-Catholics, and sometimes even from Catholics who do not merit such an appellation. Should they happen to be afflicted with sickness, or be reduced to poverty, or be otherwise placed in a sad and pitiable condition, their fate is immediately interpreted as a visible punishment of God for having changed their re-

ligion; it is looked upon as a sure sign of the injustice which they have committed. But nothing is more silly, unreasonable, and impious than to judge and talk after this fashion; for how many thousand martyrs, and among them the Saints Potitus and Prisca, have suffered incomparably more after their conversion than is at present undergone by the newly-converted? And does it indicate any crime on the part of those who embraced Catholicity? Must their sufferings and poverty, their imprisonment and death, be regarded in the light of punishments from God? St. Paul, when still a Jew, was esteemed and honored by all; but what did he not endure as soon as he became a convert? Certainly a thousand times more than the Neophytes of our day. Had he returned to the old religion of the Hebrews, his persecution would have been at an end; he would have enjoyed the highest honors, and been in possession of many goods. Was his persecution,

therefore, a chastisement from God, or was it a sign that he had done wrong in becoming a Christian? What can the impious and inconsiderate revilers answer to these questions, when they endeavor to reproach the converts of the true faith? No; God has quite different ends in view, when He permits the newly-converted to be persecuted and to wrestle with poverty and sickness. He desires to test their love, and fidelity, and perseverance. "For the Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love Him with all your heart, and with all your soul" (Deut. chap. xiii.). He wishes to point out to them the way that leads to heaven, where no man can enter save by tribulation. He wishes to give them a consoling pledge of their future happiness, for in the Gospel Christ pronounces those blessed who suffer persecution for justice, sake.

II. Neither St. Potitus nor St. Prisca wavered in the faith, much less did they abandon it, because they had to suffer many unheard-of cruelties and barbarities. They preferred dying for Christ and being saved, to living undisturbed and unpersecuted in paganism and being lost in the end. They praised God, and in the midst of exquisite sufferings and torments, they never lost their serenity and cheerfulness of heart, because they knew that a very great and an everlasting reward was reserved for them in the next life. The same sentiments should animate all Neophytes, and the like conduct should distinguish them, if, after their conversion, they fall into poverty and sickness, or are harassed by some other trouble and tribulation. They must despise the godless speeches of those who assign as a reason of their poverty and sufferings the fact of having embraced the Catholic religion; let

them set all their revilings at naught, and imagine that the serpent of evil is hissing at them through sheer envy and jealousy. Let them remember that they have not become Catholics in order to become fortunate here below, nor that God has promised temporal happiness to them that accept the faith, and consequently they have no right to complain if misery and bad fortune attend all their ways. "Have you turned a Christian for this end?" asks St. Augustine, "in order that you might be fortunate and happy in this world?" Truly, Christ did not promise riches and honors to His disciples, but He predicted for them much annoyance and vexation of every kind, and heavy persecution. One thing, however, has He pledged Himself to bestow on all who accept His holy religion and live according to its precepts—eternal joy and happiness. And this supernal reward will make amends for every loss of temporal goods, for every affliction and torment. To this crown of glory destined for them hereafter, the newly-converted should direct the eyes of their mind, and, steadily gazing upon the same in every tribulation, courage and cheerfulness would come back to their drooping spirits. It is surely preferable to be poor, afflicted, and despised for a time, and secure immortal happiness, than now to be loaded with honors, to abound in joys and pleasures, and be encompassed with an abundance of earthly goods, but be lost hereafter. He who reflects on the recompense will never grow faint-hearted in his trials, but he will be always cheerful and courageous, and account every suffering as a trifling and short-lived visitation. "If you look at the reward," as St. Augustine observes, "which your labors and sufferings will bring you, everything that you

endure will seem light and little in comparison."

The first Christians, all converts, suffered greater losses of temporal possessions, were subjected to more ignominy and injustice, and underwent more violent persecution, than ever fell to the lot of the faithful in the present age. And yet St. Paul tells us that, in consideration of a never-ending happiness, they bore all things patiently and

joyously. You have fought the hard fight of sufferings, "You have received with joy the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and permanent substance" (Hebr. chap. xiii.). "Do not, therefore, lose your confidence" (Ibid.). I advise you with the same apostle, and I exhort all newly converted who suffer for their faith, "Do not, therefore, lose your confidence, which hath a great reward" (Ibid.).

NINETEENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. CANUTE, KING OF DENMARK.

St. Canute IV., King of Denmark, was born about the middle of the eleventh century. From his earliest years he gave evidence of future sanctity, and especially did he on all occasions display great nobility of soul. Above all things, the fear of the Lord was so deeply rooted in him that anything that savored of want of restraint or betrayed impiety, or bore the least semblance of evil, was thoroughly despised by the royal Saint. Indeed he esteemed his holy religion so highly, and he was inflamed with so ardent a desire of propagating the same, that, after ascending the throne of his father, no object during his reign engrossed more of his time and attention. His first care was to construct various churches and cloisters, which he provided with rich revenues; and next his chief aim was to extirpate paganism and infidelity from his kingdom and promote the spread of the only true religion. Among the Christians, moreover, he endeavored to correct and abolish all abuses, as well as to enkindle in their minds a true and real love of virtue. In a just warfare he conquered several heathen provinces, which he afterwards strove to subject to the law of Jesus Christ.

After many glorious campaigns and successful expeditions, he espoused Adela, a daughter of Count Robert of Flanders. From this marriage sprang a son, named Charles, who, on account of the holiness of his life, was surnamed the *Pious*, and was afterwards added to the catalogue of the saints. Adela, the queen, was not less virtuous than Canute himself. The holy

king never relaxed in his zeal and ardor, and constantly regulated and administered all affairs in such a manner as to tend to the glory of God and the welfare of his subjects. His crown and sceptre and his regal purple he one day laid at the feet of the crucifix, and bending the knee, he affirmed, on oath, that he subjected both himself and his whole kingdom to Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. He protested, before God, that he desired nothing but the maintenance and promotion of the Catholic Faith and of the Divine service in the countries submissive to his rule. His own most precious diadem he presented to the church at Roschild, observing, at the same time that it was only meet and proper that the rarest and costliest of treasures should adorn whatever is most sacred and revered rather than feed idle vanity and increase worldly pride. For the clergy he ever entertained the most marked respect and reverence, and he was ever vigilant to spur his subjects on to imitate his example. In consequence of this regard for the holy priesthood, he never permitted his councillors to decree anything opposed to the rights of the Church or the interests of the clergy.

For the support of the sick and the poor, he erected various kinds of hospitals, and expended incredibly large sums for the relief of the needy. Those who administered justice and executed the orders of the State, he enjoined to assist the widowed and orphaned, and to introduce no measures weighing heavily on his subjects. If any were convicted of acting contrary to his injunctions, they were dismissed or retired from service, and were, in addition, subjected to severe penalties. There is no doubt that the affairs of his kingdom and the tender care of his subjects were the dearest and nearest objects of interest to the sovereign, but if any time remained not taken up by these duties, he wasted it neither in play or in the hunt, or the like amusements, but he devoted every spare moment to prayer and spiritual reading, or the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, before which and the crucifix he used to spend hours of sweet devotion. Besides this, he spread through his whole kingdom the veneration of the Blessed Virgin, and ordained that all the feast days of the Church in her honor should be strictly observed. In abstinence and fasting he was so severe with himself that he often remained many days without any food. Concealed underneath his purple he wore a rough penitential garb, and often scourged himself unto blood. The Roman breviary attests that he never deviated from the path of justice and the Divine law, but reached the highest summit of Christian perfection.

A king so virtuous and holy was too great a treasure for this

earth, and therefore God called him to His heavenly abode by granting him the glorious crown of martyrdom. The occasion of his death was the following: A numerous army, under the command of William, Duke of Normandy, had attacked the English, who, in these straits, called upon the Danes for assistance. The holy king sent a force of well-trained troops to fight against the enemy in question, and placed his brother Olaus at the head of the expedition. But Olaus proved false to his charge, and, fired by ambition, turned his arms against his kingly brother. He knew that some of his subjects were ill pleased with the administration, because Canute insisted on the payment of their tithes, an observance of the commands of God and His Holy Church, and on the cessation and avoidance of crimes and evils formerly prevalent in the kingdom. The perjured and false brother found no difficulty, therefore, in creating a revolt, among the malcontents, and soon succeeded in originating a conspiracy against the life of their sovereign. Canute was informed of the plot, but it having been revealed to him that he would shortly have to offer up his life for justice' sake, he was not in the least surprised or terrified, and, withdrawing to the church of the martyr Albanus, he received the holy Sacrament with great devotion, and humbly commended his last struggle to God. The Saint was still absorbed in prayer when, on a sudden, a troop of rebels surrounded him, some shooting arrows at him, some hurling stones upon him, until one of the most ruthless and audacious of the band pierced him through with a lance. The saintly king, as soon as he beheld the assassins approaching, bowed low to the earth before the altar, and offered himself as a holocaust to the Lord. "God," said he, "I joyfully devote and offer my life to Thee. I die because I have protected Thy honor and the interests of the true Church. Graciously accept my offering, and grant that my enemies may one day come to the knowledge of their crime, and, repenting of the same, may obtain pardon and forgiveness from Thee, as I pardon and forgive them from my heart." No sooner was this prayer ended, than the bloodthirsty rebels accomplished the deed which we have mentioned. And thus Canute closed his life with a glorious martyrdom before His altar for whose honor and name he had ever contended as a zealous apostle. God illustrated his tomb by many miracles in behalf of Christians of every country.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The holy King Canute was always respectful to priests, and endeavored to instil the same deference and reverence for them into the hearts of his subjects. Do you strive to imitate his example. Give to the clergy and the priesthood due honor, for God Himself has commanded this: "With all thy soul fear the Lord and reverence His priests" (Ecclesiast. chap. vii.). He speaks to us through the inspired writings. To mock, therefore, and rail at His priests, to scold and calumniate them, to criticize their actions and carp at their efforts, to impute faults and crimes to them, to exaggerate their faults and errors, to darken their character and rob their good name by slander and backbiting, to despise their admonitions, are sins, and that, too, of a more grievous kind than the world is apt to imagine. For God Himself has said: "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of my eye" (Zach. chap. ii.); and "he that despiseth you, despiseth me" (Luke, chap. x.). He looks upon the insults offered to His priests as if offered to Himself, and will certainly not let them go unpunished. It has often been observed that the scoffers at religion and the revilers of priests die without the grace of being assisted by them, although they need them most. A just punishment, indeed, but a terrible one, and commonly entailing eternal perdition. Beware that you do not experience it to your own loss.

II. The holy king; by pardoning the cruel deed of his murderers and praying to God for them, proves

that He desired to die as a true disciple and follower of Christ. How do you behave when a slight persecution is waged against you? Do you show yourself a true disciple and imitator of your Saviour? Alas! your scolding tongue, your injurious words, your revilings of your persecutors, your evil wishes for them, and your thirst of revenge, indicate but too evidently that you know not the lessons and maxims which Christ has taught and practised. Repent of your fault, if by self-examination you find yourself to be wanting in this respect. Make a promise to your crucified Saviour that, through love for Him and a desire to follow His doctrine as well as the example which He gave on the cross, you will pardon from your heart whatever evil others may have done against you. Offer up, even this day, your prayers and good actions for their welfare. Should any occasion present itself, do not hesitate to benefit those who have injured you; accept it, and conquer yourself through love for your crucified Redeemer. In this way you will prove yourself a true disciple and follower of Him who not only prayed for those who crucified Him, but even granted them the grace of conversion and reconciliation. Harken to his words: "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh the sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (Matthew, chap. v.).

TWENTIETH DAY OF JANUARY.

THE HOLY MARTYRS FABIAN AND SEBASTIAN.

St. Fabian was born in Rome, and chosen by Heaven itself to be clothed with the highest dignity with which man can be invested—the dignity of occupying the Papal Chair. When the clergy and people were gathered together to elect a Pope, and the votes were divided, a snow-white dove was seen descending from on high, and finally perched itself upon the head of Fabian. This occurrence dissolved all doubt concerning the choice. Fabian was obliged to accept the burden of looking to the well-being and high interest of the entire Christian flock, and for fifteen years he ruled over Christendom with the utmost care and solicitude, so as to deserve universal praise and admiration. His reign was crowned with martyrdom, which he suffered courageously during the persecution of the Emperor Decius, in the year of our Lord 252.

St. Sebastian was descended from a noble parentage, his father being from Narbonne, while his mother was a native of Milan. His great personal beauty, his prudence and bravery, enhanced his worth so much, and made him so beloved and esteemed by the Emperor Diocletian, that the most excellent portion of his warriors was entrusted to his care, and he was created by him commander of the body-guard. But Diocletian was not aware of the fact that Sebastian was a Christian, for the Saint kept this a secret in order to assist his brethren in the faith more effectually, and bestow divers benefits upon them. For he was accustomed to visit them in the prisons, to supply them with the necessary food, to strengthen them in the faith, and to exhort them to martyrdom. Marcus and Marcellinus, two brothers, were, on account of their faith, detained as prisoners in the house of an officer named Nicostratus. The sentence of death had been passed upon them, but their parents and relations had asked a respite of thirty days from the governor, Chromatius, hoping that within this period they would be able to persuade the two confessors of Christ to a renunciation of their faith. They strove to effect this in every manner possible, and, in truth, by their persuasion and flattery, by their prayers and tears, they succeeded in causing the brothers to begin to waver in their faith. As soon as Sebastian was informed of their want of resolution and of their being on the point of turning away from Christ, he

visited them and exhorted them in the most earnest and eloquent manner, and finally brought them to such firmness and determination, that they resolved to suffer death and every imaginable torture rather than abandon the true faith. A wonderful prodigy, which took place during the exhortation which Sebastian addressed to the wavering brothers, aided much in obtaining the desired result. This was a dazzling heavenly light which flooded the room in which the two brothers, with their parents and relations, were assembled. At the same time they beheld Christ, encircled with a group of angels, approach Sebastian and kiss him, while uttering these words: "Sebastian, you shall always be with me." This apparition caused not only the conversion of the parents of the two brothers, but also of Nicostratus, and of Zoe, his wife, who was mute before, but received the use of her organ of speech from Sebastian, as also of Claudius, the jailer, all of whom afterwards suffered martyrdom for the confession of their faith.

At the expiration of the thirty days' respite, Chromatius summoned Tranquillinus, the father of the two brothers, and inquired of him what he had effected, and how his sons were disposed? Tranquillinus replied: "My sons are happy, and so am I, because, together with me, they have come to know the truth of that faith out of which no salvation can be expected." Chromatius was startled at the answer, and said: "Hast thou also turned a fool in thy old age?" "I have turned a Christian," replied the father; "and in this I have acted wisely. It was folly, indeed, that up to this time I adored mute idols instead of the true God, but now I have laid aside this folly." Chromatius desired to possess more circumstantial proofs and more convincing arguments; and thereupon Tranquillinus explained to him the truth of one only God, and the absurdity of paying worship to idols, with so much force and beauty, that Chromatius expressed an earnest desire of hearing more on the subject, especially from the lips of Sebastian. The future illustrious martyr convinced him in a few words of the divine nature of faith, and Chromatius received baptism with his whole household, consisting of many servants, captives, and bondsmen, who were restored to liberty after having been enriched with the freedom of the children of God. He resigned his office of governor, and, retiring from the city to a country seat, he was able, on account of his large property, abundantly to supply the Christians who had been exiled or voluntarily fled from the city. In the mean time the persecution grew daily more violent. The holy Pope Caius counselled all who did not venture to face martyrdom to seek shelter before the storm came upon them, and to retire to a hiding-place until the tempest had

abated and was past. The same advice he gave to St. Sebastian, who, however, could not be induced to flee, but confidently assured St. Caius that he would remain in the city in order to strengthen and exhort the Christians to combat courageously and secure the martyr's crown. Caius was exceedingly pleased with his bold resolve, and said to him: "Yes, stay, my son, on the battle-ground and, under the colors of a commander of Cæsar's, perform the labor of a defender of the Church of Christ."

The Emperor Diocletian was soon informed by an apostate Christian that Sebastian was a worshipper of Christ, and was most zealous in exhorting others to perseverance and constancy in the same faith. He was immediately ordered into the Emperor's presence and reprimanded for his ingratitude, as it was styled, because Sebastian, after being so much favored by him, not only dared to profess the Christian religion, but also to induce others to embrace its doctrines. The holy martyr answered his charges with Christian freedom, and explained to the Emperor what reasons had convinced him to change his belief. But Diocletian would not listen to his words of excuse and explanation, and endeavored by flattery and promises, as well as by threats, to undermine his resolution. When he saw that all his persuasion availed nothing, he gave orders for Sebastian to be tied to a stake, and to be shot at with arrows until he expired. The command was instantly executed. They stripped him of his garments, fastened him to a stake with cords, and discharged their arrows at him until they believed that life was fled. When night was come, a pious matron, called Irene, whose husband had but a short time before sacrificed his life in testimony of his true belief, took up the body in order to accord it a becoming burial. She perceived, however, that the Saint gave signs of life, whereupon, aided by others, she conveyed him to her dwelling, where, by timely refreshments and proper treatment and dressing of his wounds, he was perfectly restored to health. As soon as the Christian hero found his former health and strength returned, he, uncalled-for, appeared before the Emperor and reproached him for his injustice, because, without the slightest accusation against the Christians, he treated them so cruelly and slaughtered them so mercilessly. When Diocletian looked upon him, he was greatly astonished, and he asked him whether he were Sebastian whom he had condemned to be shot with arrows? "Yes, I am he," said the Saint; "and by the fact that I am still alive you should acknowledge the omnipotence of the God whom I adore, and your own unreasonable conduct towards His persecuted servants." The Emperor was more enraged than before, and directed the fearless Christian hero to be instantly

conducted into a public place and there to be beaten with rods, clubs, and loaded whips until he expired. The torturers forthwith complied with the order, and the glorious martyr, overpowered with blows, ended his combat in the year of our Lord 287.

His holy remains had been cast into a sewer, but St. Lucina rescued them from this ignoble resting-place, and, with many marks of honor and veneration, she had them magnificently interred. In 680 the relics of the holy martyr were translated to a splendid church which Constantine the Great had built centuries ago; and because, at the time of the transference, the city of Rome was liberated from a raging pestilence, St. Sebastian has ever been invoked as a 'protector against this evil.' The effects of his intercession in averting the dreaded plague experience has proved to be most powerful and salutary, while the veneration which is paid to the Saint, and the confidence which is reposed in the martyr's assistance, God has ever shown to be highly agreeable and pleasing to Him. Many relics of the Saint are found in Germany, France, and Spain, and everywhere they are justly held in the highest esteem.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Fabian worked out his salvation and eternal happiness in the clerical state, while St. Sebastian reached the same goal in the secular state by following the profession of arms. In either state of life, therefore, we can secure Heaven, and should you miss your aim, remember that it is not owing to your state of life, but solely to yourself. For you can serve God in any state, and what else is required to be saved, except to serve Him? Does not your catechism teach you that to serve God is to do God's will, or, what is the same thing, to keep His commandments? And he who desires to keep them must avoid evil and do good. Now, to the latter belongs the patient endurance of all opposition and persecution. For this reason have I already told you, in another place, that in order to be saved it is necessary to shun sin, to do good, and patiently to bear the sufferings which fall to our lot:

Tell me, then, which of these special requirements cannot be complied with in your state of life? St. Sebastian was able to observe these points in the secular state, and St. Fabian in the clerical state; the very same was done by so many thousand Saints, every one in his own station of life. How, then, can you imagine or say that it is not possible for you? The example of the Saints and your own conscience testify to the contrary. It is only demanded of you to set about the affair in earnest, as was done by the Saints, who lived in the same state in which you are placed, supposing that your present one is a proper one, and is in the class of those secular states which are considered honest and respectable.

II. St. Sebastian lived in the midst of heathens, at a pagan court, surrounded by godless and licentious officers and soldiers, and nevertheless neither the influence of bad

example nor the evil persuasion of companions incited him to idolatry or the committal of any crime; but he remained a strict Christian and converted many others to Christianity. Perhaps you, too, are obliged to spend your life among godless, irreligious and criminal people, with whom the world to a great extent is filled. Perhaps, too, there are times, as the Carnival, in which men are more worldly minded and more unrestrained; be on the watch, then, that you may not be disturbed by their example or solicitation either in your piety or your spirit of faith. Do not follow them; do not take their part, but strive to turn some one from evil unto good. Moreover, when all go to adore the golden calf, go you to Jerusalem to adore the Lord your God, as was

formerly done by the pious Tobias, who was constrained to dwell in the midst of sinners and Gentiles (Tobias, chap. i); or say, with the God-fearing Mathathias: "Although all nations obey King Antiochus, so as to depart every man from the service of the law of his fathers and consent to his commandments, I and my sons, and my brethren will obey the law of our fathers. God be merciful to us. It is not profitable for us to forsake the law." (1. Maccabees, chap. ii.) The great multitude of those who live unbridled lives will not excuse thee before God, for His express command is: "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil" (Exod. chap. xxiii). Live as the small number of the elect live, if you desire to be saved with the few and the elect.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. AGNES, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

Among the many Christian heroines who sealed their faith by the shedding of their blood, it is difficult to find one more admired and lauded by the holy Fathers of the Church than St. Agnes. St. Jerome, in speaking of her, says that her life is known among all nations and exalted in every tongue, by every kind of writing, because she conquered her own youth, overcame her persecutor, and consecrated her virginal chastity in her own blood. Scarcely had she recognized the priceless value of spotless virginity when she offered her purity and chastity by vow to God. As, with a modesty truly angelic, she was one day returning from school, she was espied by Eutropius, the son of the governor, Symphronius; and because God had bestowed extraordinary beauty upon her, the young Roman became so enamored of her that neither by day nor by night could he find rest or repose. He visited her parents and asked for her hand, carrying with him many costly presents, which he laid at the feet of the chaste virgin. Agnes accepted none of his gifts, but, without delay, she said to him, in holy earnest and

fearless zeal: "Depart, and go thy ways, I have another suitor and bridegroom who has attracted me to Himself and possesses my love; I will remain true to Him and deliver myself to Him with my whole heart."

The youth, on seeing himself so positively refused, became distracted with grief and disappointment, and fell sick. When his father learned the cause of his sickness, he sent a third person to the house of St. Agnes to ask her in marriage for his son. Agnes replied to the suitor that she could not dismiss her first wooer and bridegroom and perjure herself. The governor then desired to know who was the bridegroom she alluded to, when a courtier that was present replied: "It is useless to waste time in this investigation, for Agnes is a Christian and imagines Christ to be her bridegroom." This sufficed the selfish governor to obtain a pretext from this information to place her under arrest. When Agnes had been arraigned before his tribunal, he urged his request a second time, and supported it in the beginning with mild and sweet words, large promises of honors and estates, and finally he tried to intimidate her by threats of cruelty and death. "Either renounce thy Christ," said the judge, "and consent to the marriage, or, if thou desirest to remain a virgin, offer sacrifice to the goddess Vesta, and enroll thyself among the Vestals. If thou refuse to choose either alternative, I will have thee sent to a house of debauch, that every wanton wretch may make sport of thy virtue." The holy Virgin replied with fearless modesty: "Thou hopest in vain for my consent. I will not slight my bridegroom or break my word and faith with Him by not remaining true to His love. I will neither offer sacrifice to the goddess Vesta nor to any other false God or goddess, but I adore and pay homage only to the one true God. To threaten me with the disgrace of being sent to a den of licentiousness, does not intimidate me; for I have an angel of my Lord for a protector and a safeguard of my body, who will defend me against every violence. Thy false gods are the authors and instigators of such crimes, but thou wilt soon learn that my God is a God of purity and chastity, who can and will rescue me by frustrating thy wicked purpose." This bold answer enraged the governor to such a degree that he instantly gave orders to strip the chaste Virgin of her garments and to conduct her, in a state of nudity, to the house of debauch. But God, the lover and protector of chaste and spotless souls, wrought on this occasion a hitherto unheard-of and never-repeated wonder. He caused her rich hair in one moment to grow in such a profusion of length and thickness, from her head, that, streaming down over her entire person, it enveloped her as with a close-woven garment. When she had

entered the criminal and disreputable house, an angel of the Lord appeared to her, and, having placed in her hands a snow-white dress with which to attire herself, he encircled her with such a dazzling brilliancy that no one dared approach or touch her divinely-protected person. Agnes, in consideration of the heavenly protection, praised and thanked God with a loud voice and begged for further assistance. The son of the governor, determined to gratify his passion of lust, and to obtain by force and violence what he had failed to reach by adulation and promise, entered the room where the virgin was closely confined. Notwithstanding that he beheld the chaste bride of Christ surrounded with heavenly brightness and radiance, and heedless of the admonition which she addressed to him, he still was emboldened by his passion to seize her with his impure hands; but instantly he was struck by the angel of Agnes and fell lifeless to the earth.

When the governor was informed of the death of his son, maddened into fury, he hastened to the spot; for he was of opinion that magic and sorcery had deprived him of his child. He poured forth torrents of insults, and threatened her, as a common sorceress, with the most cruel mode of death.

St. Agnes answered him, in turn, with the greatest modesty and gentleness: "Neither magic nor sorcery have deprived thy son of his life, but his own audacious lustfulness. Before his entrance into the room, others had been here before him; but on seeing the divine protection which encompassed me, they ventured to give no intimation of crime, and hence, uninjured, they retired from my presence. Thy son, however, unmindful of the presence of my angel, wished to satisfy his impure cravings; and when he stretched out his hands against me, my angel chastised him." Upon this reasonable representation of the case, the fury of the governor was allayed, and his imprecations and threats were changed into supplications and prayers: "If thy Lord God be so mighty," said he, "pray to Him that He restore my son to life." Agnes prayed, and, lo! the dead man arose, crying, with a loud voice: "In very truth, the God of the Christians is the only true God!"

This astonishing miracle became immediately known throughout the whole city. The priests of the false gods, fearing that the worship of their idols would be at an end, raised a commotion among the people under the pretext that Agnes was a sorceress and plotted the downfall of the gods; and if they wished to escape the anger of the gods, they must do away with the Christian maiden. The governor refused to meddle any longer in the case, and placed the affair in the hands of

his subordinâte judge, Aspasius, who came to a speedy solution of the matter. He ordered a funeral pile to be erected and Agnes to be burnt alive as a wicked sorceress. As soon as the pile was raised, the sainted maiden had to ascend it, and the lambent flames, shooting up from every side, encircled the heroic Virgin. But God repeated the marvel which He on a former occasion wrought in the Babylonian furnace. The flames were parted in two, and Agnes, sitting unscathed in the fiery arch, praised God with a loud and jubilant voice. A violent wind arose at the same time and wafted the flames upon the surrounding crowd, many of whom perished, or were, at least, severely burnt; finally, the blazing pile was of a sudden completely extinguished. The Christian heroine, however, continued to sit there unmoved, radiant and cheerful of countenance, and blessing and praising God.

The priests of the idols, full of bitterness and rancor, were ever restless, and desired by all means to see her immolated. Therefore they did not hesitate to assert that this striking wonder, too, was the result of the art of magic. To satisfy their villainous demands, Aspasius ordered one of the executioners to thrust his sword through her throat. The servant bid to dispatch the Saint trembled with fear, but Agnes herself encouraged him with these words: "Why dost thou hesitate? Perish this my body which is pleasing in the eyes of those whom I desire not to please." Next, turning her eyes to heaven, she cried unto God, with a voice of exultation: "Receive, O Lord, my soul, which has cost Thee so much, and which Thou hast loved so much!" Whilst she uttered these words, the executioner inflicted the sword thrust, causing her death, and the invincible Virgin-heroine ended her glorious battle. Her energy and fortitude deserve the greater praise and admiration, as she had not yet completed her thirteenth year. She was buried by her own parents with all respect and honor. While they prayed and wept one night at her tomb, a choir of holy virgins appeared to them, in whose midst they saw their own daughter, resplendent with exceedingly great glory, and accompanied by a snow-white lamb. Rapt in wonder, they gazed tearfully upon her, and heard these consoling words: "Cease your weeping, beloved parents! Behold, my life is a life of pure, never-ending joys. Rejoice and be glad with me, for He whom I have ever loved from the bottom of my heart has made me a partaker of the happiness of heaven, and set upon my brow the crown of everlasting glory."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. What energy of will and constancy of purpose does St. Agnes display in the observance of her vow! In her tender childhood she had vowed to God the preservation of her virginal purity, and this vow she never violated, but kept it faithfully and fulfilled it perfectly at the cost of her life. Many there are who bind themselves by all kinds of promises and vows to God, especially when they are afflicted with sickness, or suffer persecution, or experience some particular holy zeal and devotion; but how remiss and negligent are they in their keeping and fulfilment of them! Some do not observe them at all, or wish to be dispensed from them; others put off to an indefinite time what they have pledged themselves to do, although they could fulfil it instantly. As regards this point, observe, dear reader, that to make a vow to God is holy, pleasing to Him and most useful to man; but before any one makes a vow he should consider well whether he can observe what he promises thus solemnly to the Lord his God, particularly if anything be vowed for life.

No one should burden himself with the observance of many vows, which might cause him great anxiety and restlessness; but when any one has taken a vow or made a promise, he should diligently strive to be true to his word and to fulfil the vow without delay. Whoever neglects to observe this point is sure to incur the guilt of a venial or even a mortal sin, according to the circumstances of the case. What is said here of vows in general is especially true of the vow of

chastity. No one must take such a vow without long previous reflection and without the advice of a prudent confessor; still, should any one have bound himself to its observance, let him carefully attend to his promise. If any one for very slight reasons should desire to be dispensed, let him remember that he is treating with God. One thing is certain, that a dispensation obtained under a false pretext or on trifling grounds has rarely met with a prosperous issue; nay, a dispensation thus stealthily exacted is invalid and sinful before God. And yet thousands there are who have kept the like promises and vows, and why should you not be able to observe what you have stipulated and solemnly vowed? "If thou hast vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it; for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth Him" (Ecclesiastes, chap. v.). "And if thou delay, it shall be imputed to thee for a sin" (Deut. chap. xxiii.). "And it is much better not to vow, than after a vow not to perform the things promised" (Ecclesiastes, chap. v.). Such are the emphatic words of Holy Writ on this matter. Here, too, it is proper to introduce what St. Paul says of those who do not keep the vow of chastity: "They have damnation, because they have made void their first faith" (1 Timothy, chap. v.).

II. How heroic is the conduct of St. Agnes, a maiden of thirteen years, in the preservation of her purity and the confession of the true Faith! Wonderful, on the other hand, is the protection which God vouchsafes her in the greatest dangers, and terrible the punishment

which falls upon the licentious, and unchaste Eutropius for his foolhardy and detestable attempt. Fear God, if you dare to incite others to sin; He can chastise you on the spot with instant death and cast you into hell; but trust and hope in God if unexpectedly and against your will you are exposed to danger, and struggle and contend strenuously with St. Agnes, and God will not abandon you in the fight. Agnes did not fail to banish from her presence the suitor who, by precious gifts, by flattery and fair words, wished to win her love and friendship. She accepted no presents and spurned all flattery and caresses. Promises and persuasion did not captivate her heart, and menaces could not frighten her into consent. She chose rather to suffer every evil, and even to lay down her life than to prove unfaithful to God by defiling her pledged purity, or renounce her faith by sacrificing to the idols.

Do you act in a like manner, if any one should incite you to sin; despise flattery and fair words, and heed no caresses. Ah! had the

unguarded, thoughtless Eve not listened to the serpent nor entered into conversation with the tempter, she would not have met with so disgraceful a fall. Accept no presents from the enemy; do not admit his addresses to you by word of mouth or by letter; let no threats intimidate you, but show yourself resolved to die rather than to offend God. Thus must you contend and combat, in imitation of the example of St. Agnes, and you will secure the crown of glory promised to the true and the brave. St. Agnes now reigns triumphantly in heaven, for, according to her own expression, she lives a life of pure joy, of joy never ending, never fading, but ineffably sweet and full of delights. But what would be her lot and fortune now, if she had not wrestled with the enemy and valiantly combatted his allies? And how will you fare, if you do not struggle courageously and repel boldly those who entice you to commit evil? Consider this well, and resolve to imitate St. Agnes. "Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life" (2 Timothy, chap. vi.).

TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF JANUARY.

STS. VINCENT, ANASTASIUS AND CLEMENT, MARTYRS.

St. Vincent, in whose honor St. Augustine preached two panegyrics, was born at Osca, in Spain. When he had grown up, he was, on account of his virtue and wisdom, ordained deacon by Valerius, the holy Bishop of Saragossa. For a long time he discharged the office of preaching with great zeal and fruit. When Dacian, a well known enemy of the Christians, came into Spain, in order to root out the Christian Religion by order of the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, the holy Bishop and his deacon were seized and brought before him. He at once sent the Bishop into exile. Vincent, however, was tortured in

divers horrible ways. At first he was cruelly scourged, then stretched on the rack and torn with iron hooks. He was laid on a gridiron over burning coals, while they tortured him above with plates of hot tin. The executioners threw on the glowing coals a great quantity of salt, which was blown upward by the heat, and severely tormented the wounded body of the martyr. Then he was carried back to prison and rolled on sharp pieces of broken earthenware.

In the midst of his torments St. Vincent not only showed wonderful patience, but even rebuked the tyrant for treating him too mildly, as he desired to suffer much more. When he had lain for a time on the sharp potsherds, the prison was suddenly filled with a heavenly light, and Vincent was healed in an instant of all his wounds. Dacian, under the pretext of regret for the cruelty with which he had treated the martyr, had him placed on a soft bed, so that, in case he died, the Christians might not honor him for martyrdom. Scarcely had the Saint been laid upon the bed, when he breathed forth his heroic soul. The tyrant ordered the body to be exposed to the birds and beasts of prey. But the Lord God, who of old sent a raven to feed Elias, sent, as St. Augustine testifies, a raven to guard the body against the beasts. As soon as the tyrant heard of this he had the body thrown into the sea. But a great wind brought it ashore, and it was reverently buried. Later it was taken up and translated with the greatest honors.



St. Anastasius, another celebrated martyr of Christ, was born of pagan parents in Persia. His father was a sorcerer, and instructed his son in the deceptive practices of his art. At that time the Persian King Chosroes brought the holy cross to Persia, and as many miracles occurred, Anastasius, then named Magadut, became most eager to know whence the cross came, who had died upon it, and why it was held in such reverence by the Christians. After some time he went to Jerusalem, took up his abode with a Christian, a goldsmith, was instructed in the Christian religion and baptized. Soon after he entered a monastery, where he lived for seven years with great fame for sanctity. His most agreeable occupation was to read the lives of the martyrs, and from this reading he drew a most ardent desire to shed his blood in like manner for Christ.

Hearing that a persecution was raging against the Christians at Caesarea, he obtained permission from his superior to go to that city. He had scarcely arrived when he was recognized

seized, loaded with chains, and cast into a filthy dungeon. After some days the prefect of the city had him brought before him, and commanded him to renounce Christ. When the Saint refused, he had him stretched upon the ground and beaten without mercy as long as the executioners could strike. Almost torn to pieces, he was taken back to prison, where, it was supposed, he would soon die. But the contrary happened. St. Anastasius passed the night in praising God, and was restored to perfect health and strength. The prefect, who was extremely astonished to see this, sent the Christian hero to the King in Persia. After many new torments the King ordered the Saint to be beheaded with seventy others. After death a brilliant star was seen above the body of the Saint, and a dog protected the remains against wild beasts.



St. Clement was Bishop at Ancyra in Galatia. We know of no other Saint, who, for so many years, and in so many places, was, like St. Clement, tortured for the faith in such divers and terrible ways. Three Emperors and eight prefects, all famous for bloodthirsty cruelty, endeavored with all kinds of torments to make him deny his faith. During twenty-eight years did he endure those torments, which ended only with death. Many nights and days were spent in torturing him. The rest of the time he languished in prison, excepting only a few days when he enjoyed liberty. No kind of suffering endured by the martyrs before him, had been left untried. Though any one of them would have been enough to put an end to his life, God, by repeated miracles preserved it, healed his wounds after each torment, and so strengthened him that he despised all threats, was most cheerful in the midst of his torments, and desired to suffer more than the tyrants were able to inflict.

Among many incidents the following is remarkable. When at first Diocletian tried to persuade him to deny Christ he laid before him, on the one hand, rare vases, cloths, gold, and insignia of the highest dignities, and on the other, all imaginable instruments of torture, commanding him either to deny Christ and take the riches, or be ready to undergo all the torments that could be inflicted with those dreadful machines. St. Clement raised his eyes towards heaven and sighed, grieving, that Christ was compared with such trifles, as if He were not infinitely more worthy than all the goods, pleasures, honors and riches of this world, or as if one would not lose a thousand worlds and endure all conceivable torments, rather than lose Christ the

Lord and His grace. This unjust and disparaging comparison of Christ with miserable earthly goods, exceedingly pained the holy man, and with impressive words he upbraided the tyrant with it, declaring himself ready to lose his life a thousand times by the most terrible torments, rather than deny Christ.

He confirmed what he said by undergoing unheard-of sufferings with invincible patience and fortitude. St. Clement owed this heroic courage and fortitude in great measure to his mother. She was no longer alive; but years ago she had often spoken to him of the supreme happiness of those Christians who offered their lives for the faith. She told him of those who in her own time, and before, had shown themselves fearless of torments. She gave him their lives to read, and often earnestly admonished him, if God should deem him worthy to suffer for Christ's sake, to be steadfast and think of the eternal reward which must surely follow after brief suffering. Hence, St. Clement had early desired to suffer much for the faith and to die a martyr. His desire was fulfilled. After many and prolonged sufferings he ended his life by a stroke of the sword, a glorious martyr, in the year of our Lord 303. Many pagans were converted to the faith by seeing his heroic perseverance, and the many wonders which were wrought during his sufferings in various places.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. It gave unspeakable pain to the holy Bishop Clement, that Christ the Lord was compared with the mean honors and goods of this world, that he was requested to deny Christ for them, and consequently prefer them to the Lord. For he knew that we must value God and His grace infinitely more than all the goods of the world, and that consequently we may not offend Him and lose His grace, even if we could thereby obtain all the goods, honors and enjoyments of the world. And this is just what our Saviour taught us long ago, commanding Satan to depart when he offered Him all the kingdoms of the earth if He would adore him. If those goods and honors, which were promised to St. Clement, were offered to men at the present day,

how many would forsake Christ! "If at present the evil spirit were to offer whole kingdoms," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "how many would without delay, adore him! For many commit the most grievous sins for a single coin. What would they not do if they could gain kingdoms!" Only think what you yourself have done. As often as you offended God for the sake of a momentary sensual pleasure, or for some temporal gain, so often you preferred that gain or sensual pleasure to Christ, and esteemed it of greater value than God and His grace. Are you not ashamed for having acted so foolishly? What has it profited you? What good would it now be for St. Clement to have preferred those honors and worldly goods, to Christ our

Lord? Long ago he must have left them, and lost with them his eternal happiness. Judas, who preferred thirty pieces of silver to his Master, by betraying and selling Him for so small a sum, did not possess the silver long—did not enjoy even part of it, but lost his soul and his soul's happiness forever. And so it shall happen to you, if for temporal honors, or earthly goods, or vile sensuality, you offend your God. If you sin on their account, you prefer them to Christ our Lord. Verily, the injustice you would do God deserves to be punished with eternal damnation.

II. St. Vincent, St. Anastasius, and St. Clement, these three Christian heroes, endured many great and long sufferings for Christ's sake. The tyrants treated them most cruelly. But how stands it now? The pains of the martyrs are long since ended. They now enjoy a

reward which shall never have an end. The cruelty of the tyrants is also long since over: but their punishment shall never end. The remembrance of this truth should comfort and encourage you in suffering. Think with yourself: my sufferings, how great soever they may be, shall come to an end. The reward, on the contrary, will be eternal. But what is said of the tyrants should fill you with a great fear of sin. Think how the enjoyment and profit you seek in sin shall end, and how the punishment you must expect, will last forever. St. Augustine in his two panegyrics of St. Vincent, wished to point out these two lessons, when he said: "The wrath and cruelty of Dacian, as well as the sufferings of Vincent, are over: but now punishment lasts for Dacian, reward for Vincent."

TWENTY THIRD DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. JOHN THE ALMONER, PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA.

St. John, who is celebrated throughout the Christian world for his charity to the poor, was born on the island of Cyprus. His father, who was the Governor of the whole island, and united Christian piety with worldly dignity, took part with his wife in giving John a good education. In youth John showed a great desire for the ecclesiastical state; but he yielded to the wishes of his parents, and was married to a virtuous person. God having called her away by an early death, John gave thanks that he was again free to follow his former inclination. His manner of life was so virtuous and holy, that, when some years later the Patriarch of Alexandria died, almost all the inhabitants of that city with one voice, demanded him as successor. The Emperor, to whom they made this appeal, was well acquainted with the virtue and sanctity of John, and so arranged matters, that, notwithstanding his reluctance, the Saint had to give his consent. The first

care of the new patriarch was to root out heresy and to restore the true Faith to his flock. So successful were his labors, that before his death he could count in the great city seventy Catholic churches, where at first he had found only seven small chapels.

The diligence with which the holy patriarch endeavored to lead back his sheep from the paths of iniquity into the way of virtue, is indescribable. He exacted of them the greatest reverence in the churches: for he could not bear laughing, talking, looking about, and other unbecoming actions, in the holy place, but punished them without distinction or consideration of persons. With apostolic zeal he preached against vice, and with all his strength sought to prevent it. He was accustomed to recommend to one and all the frequent remembrance of death as a powerful means to avoid sin and persevere in the practice of virtue. He, himself, made use of it with great profit. Every morning he said, to himself: "This is, perhaps, my last day. Perhaps I shall not live till night." Before lying down to sleep, his thought was: "This is, perhaps, my last night." He had his grave made, but not entirely finished, and one of his servants was obliged to come every day and say: "Master, your grave is not yet finished. Command that it be finished, for the hour of death is uncertain." Thus did the Saint remember his death every day, and thereby keep himself in holiness.

Doubtless, all this procured great praise for St. John. But nothing spread his fame more widely through the world, than his wonderful and life-long love and charity for the poor. From his tenderest years he had, on every occasion, practised these virtues. His inheritance was almost entirely bestowed upon the poor. "All that I have," he was accustomed to say, "does not belong to me, but to God. It is lent me, and, therefore, I must give it back to God in the persons of His poor." The patriarchate was pleasing to him only inasmuch as it enabled him to do more good to the poor. These he called his masters, and intercessors with God. He wrote down in a book the names of the poor, so as to forget none of them in the distribution of alms. He erected many hospitals and houses, in which the sick, strangers, and the poor, were cared for. Every Wednesday and Friday he seated himself at the entry of the church, so that all who desired could easily come to him. Once he had spent there the whole day, and no poor man had made his appearance. Hereupon he grew sad, and said with a sigh: "To-day John has received no reward, and can offer God nothing for his sins." The greatness of the sums which the Saint spent upon the poor, is almost incredible. God sent him money in miraculous ways, and the more he gave, the more he received, and not without miracle, as many instances

in his life go to show. When at times money was wanting, he spared neither his furniture nor his own clothing. A nobleman once gave him 36 ducats, and a costly coverlet, earnestly begging him to use the latter for his own bed. The Saint used it once, then sold it, and gave the price to the poor. In his sermons and private conversations, he often exhorted his hearers to generosity towards the needy. There lived at that time a bishop, Troilus by name, who was rather miserly. Happening to visit St. John, the Saint took him to the hospital to visit the sick. When taking their leave, the Saint hinted that it was becoming to leave an alms for the sick. Troilus, who did not wish to be known for what he really was, took some money from his pocket and gave it to John, but on his return home was so overpowered with regret, that he fell sick. To restore him to health the Saint gave him as much money as he had received. During the following night this miserly bishop saw in sleep a lordly palace in heaven, with the superscription: "Dwelling of Bishop Troilus." But immediately after he saw a person saying to a servant: "Away with this superscription. Put instead of it: Dwelling of John, Patriarch of Alexandria." The bishop understood very well the meaning of the vision, related all to St. John, and from that hour imitated him in his charity to the poor.

The following incident is instructive and consoling: A rich merchant brought St. John a great sum of money for the poor, begging him, at the same time, to pray much for his son, whom he had sent with a vessel of merchandise to Africa. St. John gave his promise and kept it. However, the son died soon after; the vessel was sunk with all the merchandise, yet so that all the passengers saved their lives. The merchant was grieved beyond measure. But while asleep he saw St. John, who was still living, standing before him, and addressing him thus: "Why art thou grieved? Didst thou not beg me to pray for thy son? I did so, and it is so well with him, that it could not be better. Had he remained alive longer, he would have plunged into the greatest crimes, and have been damned. As to the ship, had I not prayed, all in it would have perished; but thy merchandise would have been thy ruin. Behold, thou hast reason to thank God and adore His decrees." Upon this vision the merchant awoke, went to St. John, gave him an account of it, and thanked him for his holy prayers. The Saint gave him the same advice he had given him in sleep. At another time he taught one of his nephews how to do good to our enemies. The young man had been grievously insulted by an innkeeper, and was meditating revenge. As soon as the holy man heard of it, he called his nephew, and pretending to be very angry against the innkeeper, said: "Nephew, leave

vengeance to me. I will have such satisfaction, that all Alexandria will be astonished." The nephew was contented. St. John sent word to the innkeeper that he freed him of the tax he owed the Church, as he was resolved to pay it himself. In truth the whole city admired such unheard-of Christian revenge, and then only did the Saint rebuke his nephew for meditating unlawful revenge.

We must omit, for brevity's sake, many other examples of the virtues of our Saint. We shall only add something about his holy end. He had been called by the Emperor to Constantinople. When he had reached the island of Rhodes, there appeared to him in broad daylight a venerable old man, who said to him, "John, the King of kings calls thee." The Saint understood well the meaning of his words. He went to Cyprus, into a city called Amathus, where he had been born. There he fell dangerously ill, and, after receiving the last Sacraments, made the following testament: "My Lord and my God! I give Thee thanks that Thou hast deemed me worthy to return to Thee during my whole life what was Thine. Nothing is left but the third part of a penny. Hereby I leave it to the poor, my brethren. But to Thee, oh! my God, I give my soul." When he died, many servants of God, who were engaged in prayer, saw his soul ascending into heaven, surrounded by a great company of those whom he had, in this life, supported as well spiritually as corporally, and had sent to heaven before him. His happy death took place in the year of our Lord 620.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. From what the holy Bishop said in a vision to the merchant who had given him a great alms, we learn, that if we act properly, our prayers and alms-deeds are never fruitless. If God does not give us that which we desire, He is sure to give us other far greater and more necessary graces. We learn, besides, that the temporal misfortunes which God allows to befall us, are for our own advantage. But learn, above all, from St. John, how to behave towards the poor and sick. He spent upon them his rich inheritance and large income. What great consolation this gave him at the hour of death! What happiness,

and how great a reward it merited for him in heaven! To see at the hour of death a multitude of the Blessed coming to accompany him to heaven: oh! what consolation! To see a magnificent mansion raised for him in heaven, what supreme happiness! All this his mercies to the poor and sick, had deserved. Would he have had this consolation and happiness, if he had spent his income for vain dress, for gluttony in eating and drinking, for unnecessary or even sinful pleasures of the body, for the maintenance of dogs, horses, or other animals? Surely not. Do you desire consolation in death, and after it an abode in

heaven? Succor the poor and sick according to your means. "I do not remember ever to have read that he died a bad death who had diligently exercised himself in the works of charity: for he has so many who intercede for him, and it is impossible that God would not hear the prayers of so many intercessors." Such are the words of St. Jerome.

II. "This is, perhaps, my last day. Perhaps, I shall not live till evening." Thus St. John addressed himself every morning. In the evening, he said: "Perhaps this is my last night." He imagined death to be near at hand, and by so doing, encouraged himself in the service of God. Oh! that you did the same! You believe that you must die: but you imagine that death is a long way off, and so its remembrance helps you little. You give yourself up to temporal cares, you fall for that reason into many sins, and have little thought of your salvation: for you think, like the foolish man in the Gospel, that you have many years to live, and that death is far off. Who knows

whether the words addressed to that foolish man shall not be applied to you: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee: and whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" This rich, world-wise fool, promised himself many years to make good cheer in wealth and ease, when he was not to live one day longer. Do not follow this fool, but imitate the wisdom of St. John, by imagining that death is very near. Think with yourself: "It may be that I shall die soon. It may be this year, this month, this week, this day, or even to-night." This thought will keep you from sin and urge you on to penance and fervor in the service of God. "Very quickly must thou be gone from hence," writes the venerable Thomas a'Kempis . . . "Thou oughtest, in every action and thought, so to order thyself, as if thou wert immediately to die . . . Ah, fool! why dost thou think to live long, when thou art not sure of one day? How many, thinking to live long, have been deceived, and unexpectedly have been snatched away!"

TWENTY FOURTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. TIMOTHY, BISHOP OF EPHESUS, AND ST. JULIAN, BISHOP OF CONCHA.

The high esteem with which the Apostle Paul cherished Timothy, and the many praises which he bestowed upon him in his Epistles, are a convincing proof that St. Timothy was adorned with all those virtues which characterize an apostolic man. St. Paul calls him his dearest son and faithful companion, a servant of Christ, his brother, and the servant of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who does not seek himself, but Christ the Lord, etc., all encomiums that can only be given to a great Saint. Timothy was born at Listra, or Lystris, in Lycaonia. His father was a pagan, and his mother, a Jewess, embraced the Christian

religion when St. Paul came with St. Barnabas to Listra. By the care of his mother, Timothy was brought up in the Faith, and was well instructed in the laws of God. When, afterwards, St. Paul came with Silas, his companion in his journeys, to Listra, he chose Timothy for co-laborer in announcing the doctrine of Jesus. After that, Timothy made many difficult journeys with St. Paul, and was often sent to preach the Gospel in various places whither the Apostle could not go in person. To make him more fit for these duties, St. Paul ordained him priest, and afterwards Bishop of Ephesus. He sent him two Epistles, the first from Laodicea, the second from Rome, in both of which he instructed him most carefully how to fulfil the duties of the Episcopal dignity. From one of these letters, we learn that Timothy had fasted strictly, and had abstained from the use of wine. Paul, who was anxious about his health, advised him, on account of his weak stomach, to take a little wine.

The Saint finished the great labors, which he underwent for the conversion of the pagans and the good of the newly converted, with a glorious martyrdom. For, when at Ephesus, where many were still pagans, a great feast was held in honor of the goddess Diana, the holy Bishop, urged on by his great zeal, went into the midst of the pagans, who were just engaged in offering sacrifices. With earnest and impressive words he showed them the impiety of their actions, and requested them to desist. But the enraged pagans rushed furiously upon him, dragged him for a time upon the earth, and at last began to stone him. Then the Christians bore him away by main force, and carried him to the top of a neighboring hill, where, full of joy that he could suffer and die according to his desire for the name of Christ, he gave up the ghost.



Beside this holy Bishop of early Christianity, we place another, who lived much later, it is true, but who imitated most closely the virtues of St. Timothy. His name is Julian. He was born at Burgos, in Spain. When he was being baptized, there appeared upon the baptismal font a most beautiful youth, with an island upon his head, who said to those present: "Julian is his name." Even when a boy, he showed uncommon devotion and love of God. He fasted three times a week, and every day spent several hours in prayer. While studying the liberal arts and divine sciences, he manifested an unwearied diligence; but he never, on their account, put aside his practices of piety. After the death of his parents, men tried to persuade him to

marry; but he had already resolved to serve God in virginal purity. Consequently, he took up his abode in a narrow dwelling, which he had built next to the monastery of the Augustinians, and lived there like a holy hermit. When, subsequently, he had been ordained priest, and the office of preaching had been imposed upon him, he endeavored, as well by the example of his virtues, as the zeal of his preaching, to further, according to his ability, the welfare of his neighbor. The fame which he thus obtained was so great that, after the death of the Bishop of Concha, he was unanimously elected successor. He opposed the election as long as he could, but had to give way to the desires of King Alphonsus, and accepted the burden of the Episcopate.

With what merit, and with what profit for his flock, he bore it, cannot be fully declared. He visited the whole diocese every year, preached everywhere, exhorted all to do penance, and to keep the commandments of God and the Church. He divided his income without reservation among the poor. He supported himself with the labor of his hands, by spending his hours of leisure in making baskets, which he afterwards sold to get the money necessary for food and clothing. He daily gave food to a great number of poor people in his house. At one time he saw among them one more pitiable than the rest, who, from his appearance, seemed to be of high rank. He called him, and asked who he was. The poor man was at once surrounded with a great splendor, and said: "It gives me great joy, beloved Julian, that you do so much good to the poor. As a reward, I promise thee eternal glory." So saying, he disappeared, and Julian knew that Christ had appeared to him like a pauper, and he was the more encouraged to persevere in his mercy for the poor. To exercise this mercy as much as he desired, Julian obtained more than one miracle from God. When, during a great scarcity, he had no more corn to give to the needy, he turned in prayer to God. When he had finished, there came to him miraculously so much corn that all the city enjoyed the blessing. Not less great was the joy of the inhabitants when they were delivered from the pestilence by the prayers of their holy Bishop.

God wrought many other wonders through His faithful servant, as well before as after his holy death. The holy Bishop had, notwithstanding his austerities and manifold labors, reached his eightieth year, when God sent him a severe sickness. The holy man looked upon it as a sign of approaching death, and prepared himself for it by devoutly receiving the Sacraments and practising most strictly all kinds of virtues. In his last hour, the Queen of Heaven appeared to him in the company of many virgins, and, giving him a palm branch, said: "Take, thou ser-

vant of God, this palm branch, as a sign of thy purity, which thou hast preserved unspotted." Julian raised himself up as well as he could, gave thanks to God and His holy Mother, and thus gave up his soul in great joy, in the year 1208.

On account of the testimony which the Virgin Mother gave of the unspotted purity of St. Julian, I must relate, in conclusion, an incident, from which those who associate too freely with persons of the other sex can learn in what danger they are of being deceived by the evil spirit and precipitated into the most detestable crimes. The holy Bishop had given the money which was demanded for a woman enslaved by the Moors. Satan, having taken the form of this woman, came to the holy man, thanked him at first for the benefit, offered himself as servant, and stretched out the hand with caressing gestures in order to touch him. The holy man started, and, before he could be touched against his will, an unseen hand drew him back, with the words: "Take care, Julian! It is not the person you think, but the unclean spirit, who seeks to deceive you." The enemy fled instantly, but the holy man humbly thanked God for having exposed the designs of the tempter and saved him from the danger.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Notwithstanding his apostolic labors, St. Timothy fasted very strictly, and voluntarily abstained from the use of wine until St. Paul ordered him to take some. Can you not observe strictly at least the obligatory fasts of the Church? Do you believe that those excuses which you now give will avail before God? Can you not at times, through the desire of overcoming yourself for the love of God, or of mortifying your body, which has sinned so much, abstain from some drink or food which is pleasing to you? Why do you not do so? Believe me, these victories over yourself, though they appear small, are precious sacrifices, most pleasing to God, which we can offer daily with great merit. Zealous servants of God have always been most diligent in their practice. For we derive by

them the advantage of keeping farther off from unlawful pleasures; the more we endeavor to abstain from such as are lawful. "True servants of God," says St. Gregory, "have this peculiarity, that they abstain from lawful pleasures in order to remove themselves farther from those which are unlawful."

II. St. Julian feeds with his income many poor people. Christ appears to him, and promises eternal glory as a reward. See how liberally God rewards mercy to the poor. Therefore, thou shouldst exercise thyself in the works of mercy according to thy means. Thou canst not use thy temporal possessions better than by showing thyself liberal towards the poor, for so thou meritest possessions which are eternal. "Give bread to the poor, and receive Paradise for it," says

<p>St. Chrysostom. "Divide the little you have among the needy, and receive an abundance. Give what is transitory, and take as a reward what is eternal." And again: "See what likeness there is between what you give and what you receive. You give temporal things, and receive instead things eternal. You give what you must one day leave</p>	<p>behind, and receive instead much which can be yours forever." St. Austin writes: "Wilt thou be a good merchant and cunning usurer, give what thou canst not keep, so that thou mayst receive what thou canst not lose. Give a little to obtain a hundredfold. Give of thy temporal goods in order to obtain an eternal inheritance."</p>
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TWENTY FIFTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. PAULA, WIDOW, AND ST. BATHILDIS, QUEEN OF FRANCE.

St. Paula, of whom mention is made on this day in the Roman Martyrology, was born at Rome in the fourth century. She belonged to an eminently famous, noble family, and in the course of time was married to Torotius, a man of equally high and noble rank. They were blessed with four daughters and one son. Paula was the wealthiest and most esteemed matron in Rome. After the death of her husband, she entirely laid aside the vain pomp of the world, and devoted herself with great fervor to the service of God. The instructions given by St. Jerome, who was then at Rome, had much to do in effecting so happy a change. Prayer, the pious education of her children, and care for the poor and sick, were her only occupations. The spiritual conversations which she was wont to have with St. Jerome and the holy Bishops Paulinus and Epiphanus, who had come from the Holy Land to Rome, excited in her an ardent desire to visit the holy places in Palestine, and to spend there the rest of her life. After providing for the welfare of her children, she left her splendid mansion, her possessions and servants, went on board a ship, and with her daughter, Eustochium, sailed to the Holy Land. There she visited with the greatest devotion those holy places, which were sanctified by the life and passion of Christ, and finally took up her abode at Bethlehem, for she had an extraordinary devotion to the place where Jesus was born. She spent there twenty years, and visited during that time many other places, and some anchorets who were famous for sanctity.

St. Jerome relates how virtuous was the life Paula led at Bethlehem, where he himself lived. In her dress, manner of living, and whole conduct, she was so humble that no one who did not

know her, would have taken her for the noble Roman matron, but rather for an ordinary serving-maid. Her chastity was such, that from the death of her husband till the end of her life, she would never eat alone with a man, were he even a bishop. Her penances and austerities were almost immoderate. She abstained from flesh meat, wine, fish, honey, eggs and milk, and fasted every day. Her nightly rest she took upon the bare ground, but only for a few hours: for she spent the greater part of the night in prayer. She shed so many tears over her small faults, that one would not expect more from the greatest sinner of the world. When men tried to dissuade her from the practice of so many penances, she answered: "No, no! This face, which I so often adorned for mere vanity's sake, must be disfigured. This body, which was too delicately cared for, must now be punished. For laughing much I must do penance by weeping much. Instead of fine clothing I must wear rough sackcloth." Thus spoke the holy widow, not allowing herself to be deterred from a life of penance.

Notwithstanding her severity towards herself, she was full of love and kindness for her neighbors. She used a part of the treasures, which she had brought with her, in the erection of one monastery for men, and of three others for women: the rest she divided among the poor, so that she often suffered want. Though she lived so holily, it yet happened that impious tongues were bold enough to calumniate her, to mock her as a hypocrite, and persecute her in many other ways. God, who permitted these trials, sent her also many painful sicknesses. Yet it was wonderful to see, with what patient, nay, joyful sentiments, Paula bore all, never uttering a complaint against God or men. St. Jerome testifies that she consoled and encouraged herself in such trials with some passage from the Holy Scriptures, which she daily read.

At length, after this incomparably holy widow had lived for twenty years in Bethlehem in a most saintly manner, at first in a little house, afterwards in one of the monasteries she had founded, she was taken with a deadly sickness. Eustochium, her holy daughter, prayed most earnestly to God that the life of her holy mother might be lengthened; but the latter wished nothing more eagerly, than to be freed from this world and be united with Christ. After receiving the holy Sacraments, she spent the rest of her time in most delightful aspirations of the soul, which showed her great love of God, and her great desire of the beatific vision, and which St. Jerome has written down in detail. This holy man, who was present with several bishops, asked her, whether she suffered much. She replied: "I feel well and quiet,

and do not experience the least trouble." Soon after she closed her eyes, signed her lips with the sign of the cross, and with acts of love, gave back to God her soul, adorned with so many virtues and merits. It was remarked that, up to her last breath, she repeated in a low voice her virtuous aspirations. This happened in the year of Christ 404, when this holy widow, this mother of the poor, this heroine who overcame the world, this living example of all Christian virtues, had reached the age of fifty years and some months. Her body was carried to the grave by the Bishops, amidst the joyful singing of the Psalms. The words, with which St. Jerome concludes the biography of this holy widow, are as follows: "Farewell, holy Paula! and assist him in his old age with thy prayers, who honors thee. Thy faith and thy works unite thee with Christ. Being with him, thou canst obtain more easily what thou askest."



In order to give the reader a double example of virtue, we add to the biography of the illustrious Roman matron, that of another lady of royal blood, whose commemoration is made on the thirtieth of this month. It is St. Bathildis. On account of her remarkable beauty she was taken to wife by Clovis II., King of France, and God blessed her with three princes. Even in the married state she lived a holy life, founded many monasteries and churches, was liberal to the poor, humble in word and deed, and led on the king to works of piety. After his death all her desires were for the solitude of the monastery, there to devote to God the remaining days of her life. Neither her sons, nor the first nobles of the kingdom, would allow it. When at last she obtained their consent, she embraced the religious life with the greatest fervor, and persevered in it as fervently to the end. In whatever the rule prescribed, she was the first and most perfect. It was her greatest joy to perform the menial labors of the monastery. But she was especially remarkable in waiting on the sick. No mother could nurse her child with greater love than that with which the holy Queen cared for the sick, night and day. God had sent her a most painful colic, from which she had to suffer much: yet no one ever saw her sorrowful or disheartened, even in her greatest sufferings, and often was she heard crying to God: "I thank thee, Oh! my Saviour, that thou sendest me, thy unworthy creature, something to suffer."

After she had spent some years most holily in the cloister, God revealed to her in sleep her approaching death. She saw before the Altar of the Mother of God a ladder which reached

into the heavens. Angels descended upon it, and took Bathildis with them into heaven. So it seemed to her, and she took it as a sign of her coming happy demise, which soon occurred, after she had prepared for it in a most Christian manner. In the last hour, a heavenly splendor filled her room, from which those present concluded that the time was at hand when that, which the holy Queen had seen in sleep, should come to pass; and so it really happened. Twenty years after her blessed death, her holy body, which was found incorrupt, was translated with the greatest solemnity to the Church of Our Lady, when many miracles were wrought upon the lame and other sick people.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Bathildis received in sleep a consoling indication of her coming happiness. She had good reason to hope for it: for she was diligent in those things which are considered marks of future beatitude, according to the testimony of Holy Writ and the Fathers of the Church. I have already enumerated them on the ninth day of this month. Here I shall place before you those things which are considered marks of future damnation. If thou wilt have good reason to hope like St. Bathildis for happiness, avoid them most earnestly, otherwise hell awaits thee. They are as follows: First, not to have a horror of sins, to commit them carelessly and without fear, and to make light of them. Second, to continue long in the state of sin, and to put off doing penance from day to day. Third, not to perform works of penance, to be satisfied with the mere confession of sins, negligently to relapse into them, or even to make a habit of them. So, also, deliberately to put oneself in the proximate occasion of sin, or continue in it after confession. Fourth, to blaspheme under suffering or persecution, to murmur and complain against God, to nourish hatred and enmity against persecutors, to desire re-

venge, or wish them all evil. Fifth, not to be merciful towards the poor. Sixth, to be careless in hearing the Word of God. Seventh, to receive the Sacraments seldom, without becoming devotion, or even unworthily. Eighth, to undervalue, despise, or even revile, after the fashion of heretics, the Mother of God, and the devotions practised in her honor. Ninth, to give one's-self up to the detestable vice of impurity. See now, whether any of these is to be found in you. If you are in earnest to escape eternal damnation, rest not, till you are free from all the marks we have enumerated.

II. Paula, the Roman widow, wept bitterly over the vanities and small faults of her former life, and punished herself for them by fasting and other works of penance. And what do you do, who have committed far greater faults? Have you not great reason to bewail them and punish your flesh for them? And why do you not do so? Think you, that eternal justice demands nothing more than an indifferently made confession? Or do you believe that sufficient to appease God whom you have so grievously offended? Oh! I know of no Saint who taught or believed so. They all teach that God desires us to punish

ourselves, and, according to the words of the Gospel, bring forth worthy fruits of penance. Observe that it is said: "Worthy fruits of penance." "Sin," says St. Augustine, "must be punished. If you wish that God should not do so, punish it

yourself. Anticipate the Lord. It must be punished either by you or by Him."

NOTE.—The conversion of St. Paul, which is commemorated to-day, is treated of in the life of the Saint.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. POLYCARP, BISHOP AND MARTYR.

Baronius tells us that St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, ended his holy life by a glorious martyrdom in the year of Christ 169. He was a disciple of the Apostles, but especially of St. John, who appointed him Bishop of Smyrna on account of his innocent life and great zeal for the propagation of the Faith. When St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, was led away to Rome for martyrdom, he visited Polycarp, and afterwards wrote him two letters, which were full of heavenly wisdom and wholesome advice. Polycarp, like a true apostle, governed his church by word and example; and, while he converted a countless multitude of pagans, instructed the faithful in the practice of all virtues. In his old age he went to Rome, whither Pope Anicetus had called him on account of a dispute as to the time for celebrating Easter. He met there many to whom he exposed the impiety of the two heretics, Valentine and Marcion, by whom they had been deceived, and so brought them back to Catholic truth. When, one day, Marcion met Polycarp, and asked whether he knew him, the Saint answered, "Yes, I know thee, the first-born of the devil."

After his return to Asia, a violent persecution was begun against the Christians under the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. At Smyrna, Statius Quadratus, the prefect of the city, began by having twelve Christians cast to the beasts. The holy Bishop redoubled his zeal, and, going from door to door, encouraged his children and exhorted them to stand firm in the Faith. But they were more solicitous for his life than their own, and begged him to withdraw from the city, so that, by escaping the persecution, he might be able to assist them longer. At last he yielded to their entreaties, and betook himself, with a few companions, to a farm, which was not far from the city, where he prayed night and day for his flock. The Christians, however, thinking the place unsafe, led the holy Bishop to another. Three days before

he was taken prisoner, God revealed to him in his sleep his approaching martyrdom; for it seemed to him that his pillow was surrounded with flames. As soon as he awoke, he said: "Dearest brethren, I have no longer a doubt that I shall die by fire for the faith of Christ. Praised be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who wishes to make me worthy of the martyr's crown!" His prophecy was fulfilled three days after.

The officers of the law, who had sought the Bishop everywhere, at last came to the house in which he was, and the holy Bishop would not make his escape, though he might have done so with ease, but said: "Now let the will of the Lord be done!" He then descended from above to the lower apartments, where the officers awaited him, received them with great affability, and encouraged them to enjoy a good dinner, which was being prepared for them, while he would spend one hour more in prayer. When he had ended his prayer, they seated him upon an ass, and accompanied him to the city. On the way they met Herod, a captain, driving with his father, Nicetus, along the road. They took up the holy Bishop into their chariot, and tried to persuade him to leave the Faith. After a long conversation, the Saint cried out: "I will never do what you advise; neither the sword, nor fire, nor any other torment can bring me to do so." At this answer Herod flew into a passion, loaded him with gross insults, and threw him from the chariot with such violence that the holy man was severely wounded in the foot. Joyfully, however, the holy old man continued on his way, till he reached the Forum. Arrived there, a voice was distinctly heard crying out from heaven, "Be courageous, Polycarp, and stand firm."

The Governor asked him, in presence of an immense multitude, whether he was Polycarp. The Saint having answered in the affirmative, the Governor commanded him to deny and insult Christ. Polycarp said: "For eighty-six years have I served Christ, and He never did me wrong: how can I then deny or insult Him?" The Governor continued to urge him, and at last had recourse to threats. "I have wild beasts in readiness," said he, "which, in case you do not obey instantly, shall tear you to pieces and devour you." "Call for them," said Polycarp, "for my resolution is taken, and shall never be changed." The Governor became furious, and said: "If thou mindest not the beasts, I will tame thee by fire." Polycarp replied: "You threaten me with a fire which burns for a time, but then has an end, while you seem to know nothing of an eternal fire which is prepared for the impious. But why do you wait? Bring your beasts, or do what you please; I am a Christian, and will never leave Christ." While the holy man spoke, his countenance was so

joyful and fearless that the spectators wondered exceedingly; they could not understand how so much heroism could animate the soul of so old a man.

Meanwhile the heralds of the Governor proclaimed aloud "Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian." At once the pagans and Jews demanded, with one voice, that he should be burnt alive, and eagerly began to gather wood to raise the funeral pile. It was proposed that the holy Bishop should be nailed to the stake, so that he might not be able to move or escape; but he said: "Leave them aside; He who, in His mercy, gives me the grace to endure the flames with patience, will give me strength to stand firm and motionless without being fastened by nails." Thereupon his hands were tied behind his back, and the funeral pile was lighted. Before the fire reached the wood, the venerable old man raised his eyes towards heaven, and said: "I praise and bless Thee, Almighty God, and return Thee thanks, that Thou dost deign to receive me this day into the ranks of Thy martyrs. I pray Thee to receive me as an agreeable holocaust. To Thee be praise and honor forever! Amen."

Scarcely had he finished his prayer when the whole pile stood out in full flame. But God showed, by an astounding miracle, that He is powerful enough to protect His servants even in the midst of flames. The fire bent to the right and left, and rose up in the shape of a brilliant arch, in the midst of which the holy Bishop stood unharmed and continued to praise God. At the same time a most pleasing odor, as of rarest spices, spread abroad. The enemies of the Christians were struck with terror, but, as they wanted the old man's death, an executioner was ordered to stab him with his sword. A twofold miracle was the result. A snow-white dove came out of the wound and flew toward heaven, and so much blood followed that the fire was completely quenched. Thus did this glorious Bishop, whom the pagans and Jews call the best Teacher of the Christians and the greatest enemy of the gods, end his brilliant combat for the Faith. At the instigation of the pagans and Jews, his holy body was burnt; but the sacred bones were taken up by the Christians and preserved with due honor.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. "For eighty-six years have I served Christ, and He has done me no wrong: how can I, then, deny or insult Him now?" This is an answer worthy to be written in</p>	<p>golden letters. Impress it deeply upon your heart, remembering how God Himself asks: "O, my people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee? Answer</p>
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thou me." What canst thou answer, whilst thy conscience convinces thee of the truth that God never did thee an injury, but, on the contrary, conferred on thee countless benefits for body and soul? How canst thou, then, have the heart to offend Him, and that so often and grievously? What astonishing iniquity and damnable ingratitude it is to offend maliciously so great a benefactor! Were a man, to whom you have done much good, to repay you by repeated insults, what would you say? "Oh!" you would cry, "how have I deserved this from him? For all my benefits I receive nothing but injuries at his hands. How despicable is his ingratitude!" But tell me, what has God deserved at thy hands? Has He done thee less good than thou didst to that man? Oh! weep bitterly over thy ingratitude, and resolve not to continue in it. Do not in future offend thy greatest benefactor, but love and praise Him for His benefits. Answer the evil spirit, when he tempts thee to sin: "My God has

done me no injury, but only good: how can I, then, offend Him?"

II. St. Polycarp did not fear the fire of the tyrant, which could burn only for a time, and then had an end; but he feared the fire which is prepared for the wicked and burns forever. Think often of the inextinguishable fire of hell, and, through fear of that God who can punish thee with it, abstain from sin. Certainly you would not sin for any gain or pleasure, if you were sure that, after sin, your hand would have to burn in a fire, were it but for a quarter of an hour. How blind and foolhardy, then, is it not to sin on account of some momentary pleasure or gain, when you must expect eternal fire on that account. Such are the thoughts of St. Augustine, who wrote: "Hell fire will not be like an earthly fire. Yet, were you forced to put your hand in earthly fire, you would do all that was demanded by him who threatens you. God threatens you with eternal fire, and will you not do good? Will you not avoid sin?"

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

St. John, who on account of his eloquence is surnamed Chrysostom, that is, golden mouth, was a fearless champion and a most illustrious teacher of holy Church. He was born in the year 347, at Antioch, of very wealthy and noble, though pagan parents, who, however, were converted to the Faith by Meletius, the Bishop of that city. As Secundus, the father of John, died early, Anthusa, his mother, devoted all her attention to his education. She sent him, on account of his great eagerness for knowledge, to hear the most famous teachers: first at Antioch, and afterwards at Athens. His progress in studies was so great, that he soon became renowned as one of the most learned men of

his time. In eloquence he had no rival. On his return from Athens to Antioch, he gave a shining example of Christian charity, by conducting gratuitously, the law-suits of widows and orphans, and skilfully bringing them to a happy close.

Animated with a desire for Christian perfection, he entered a monastery, where he lived in the greatest austerity, and wrote several most useful books, among which the most remarkable are those on the Priesthood, Virginity, and Penance. He also drew up an interesting defence of monastic life against those who mocked at and despised it. After four years of monastic life, he fled into a wilderness, where he served God for two years with such severe fasts and austerities, that he became exceedingly weak, and by divine inspiration came back to Antioch in order to regain his strength. There he was ordained Deacon by Bishop Meletius, and afterwards raised to the order of Priesthood by Flavian, the successor of Meletius. As he was receiving holy orders, a white dove descended upon his head. He discharged the office of preaching for twelve years at Antioch with indescribable zeal and profit. Even at that early period God gave him the power of healing the sick and foretelling future events. The fame of the miracles and sanctity of Chrysostom spread so far that the Emperor Arcadius, with the universal acclamation of the clergy and laity, proposed him as successor of Nectarius, Patriarch of Constantinople. The holy Priest resisted, and the Catholics of Antioch were loath to part with him. But at last he was taken in secret and carried to Constantinople, where he was consecrated Bishop of the imperial city.

The holy Bishop and Patriarch began at once to preach against the vices which had crept into his flock. He exhorted one and all to practice Christian charity, to receive the Sacraments frequently, to show becoming reverence in church, to be pure according to their state of life, to be liberal toward the poor, and to practice all Christian virtues. It is said that the Apostle St. Paul, to whom Chrysostom was especially devout, was more than once seen at his side, telling him what to preach or write. He vigorously opposed the Arians, especially when their greatest protector, Gainas, was endeavoring to obtain for them a separate Church from the Emperor, when the Saint intervened with that fearlessness which he always manifested when the interests of the Church were at stake, and happily prevented the imperial donation. He was no less fearless in the defence of wronged innocence. Eudoxia, the Empress, having unjustly deprived a poor widow of her vineyard, Chrysostom, in the first place, politely requested her, by letter, to make restitution. This proving ineffectual, he showed her the greatness of the crime by word of

mouth; but with no better result than before. When, on the feast of the Holy Cross, the Empress went to church with a brilliant retinue, the Saint met her at the door and forbade her to enter. Eudoxia was furious, and a soldier at once drew his sword to strike the Patriarch. The sacrilegious arm instantly withered, and remained motionless till he had asked the Saint's pardon. The holy Patriarch, who feared God more than all men, little heeded the anger of the Empress on this and other similar occasions. When warned not to oppose her lest he should be sent into exile, he answered: "I do not fear exile: the only thing I dread is sin." The Empress knew it: for, when on one occasion she was advised to threaten the Patriarch with disgrace or deposition, she said: "They would be of little avail. I know him: he fears nothing but sin."

Meanwhile some of the discontented Priests and Bishops took occasion from what had happened to vent their spleen against the holy Patriarch. They were not kindly disposed towards him, either because he punished their vices, or because they were jealous of his sanctity and miracles. Theophilus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, who had long been eager to ascend the Episcopal Chair of Constantinople, assembled, at the instigation of the Empress, some of the dissatisfied Bishops, and deposed St. John, on account of crimes which they maliciously laid to his charge. Eudoxia did not rest till Arcadius, who had hitherto shown so much piety, consented to the banishment of the Patriarch. Scarcely had the Saint left the city, when so terrible an earthquake took place that the Emperor and his family barely escaped with their lives. The people cried tumultuously that it was an evident punishment of God for the banishment of their holy shepherd. The Emperor was of like opinion, and at once ordered his recall.

The unspeakable joy of the people did not last long. The holy Patriarch punished crimes and abuses as before. He would not permit public games to take place at the column on which the statute of the Empress stood, because the divine service in the adjoining church was often disturbed by the tumultuous applause of the people. The Empress, more irritated than ever, again called an assembly of heretically-minded and discontented Bishops, who passed sentence that he should be banished forever from the city, and exiled in a far-distant desert land. The desires of the Empress were now satisfied. The fearless champion of God's honor was put on board a vessel and taken to the city of Cucusus, on the remotest confines of Armenia. But the punishment of God immediately followed the outrage. A fire burst forth from the ground beneath the pulpit where the holy man had

been wont to preach, and, rising up to the church-roof, was driven, without injuring the intervening buildings, upon the imperial palace, and in three hours burnt it to the ground. The hardheartedness of St. John's enemies did not allow them to look upon this as a punishment from God, but attributed the terrible conflagration to the friends of the holy man, who were condemned to death as incendiaries, and unjustly executed.

Meanwhile the Saint arrived at the place of exile, to the great advantage of those who were living there in the darkness of paganism. His holy life, his zealous preaching, and many miracles, caused thousands to embrace the Faith. He placed over them many Bishops and Priests, whom he had in part called to his assistance, and in part consecrated himself. Pope Innocent I., whom St. Chrysostom had informed of his banishment, examined his case in a Council held at Rome, and, finding him innocent, insisted with the Emperor that he should be recalled. At the same time his enemies and the Empress were urging the Emperor to exile him to countries still farther distant. The latter obtained what they so maliciously demanded. On his way to the farthest shores of the Euxine Sea, Chrysostom was so barbarously treated by the soldiers, that he was seized with a violent fever. The holy apostles Peter and Paul appeared to him in sleep and consoled him. Continuing his journey, he came to the church in which was the tomb of the holy Bishop and martyr Basiliscus. This Saint also appeared to him in sleep, and said: "Have comfort, my brother John! to-morrow we shall be together in the same place." That place was the heavenly country: for, after receiving the holy Sacraments, the brave and fearless hero, now sixty years old, died on the following day, whilst signing himself with the sign of the cross, and uttering his usual words: "God be praised in everything! Amen." At the same time God visited Constantinople with a terrible hail-storm, and four days later the Empress died.

When Theodosius, a son of Arcadius and Eudoxia, ascended the Imperial throne, he had the holy body brought back to Constantinople. No Emperor ever entered a city with so much glory: the pomp and magnificence of the entrance had never been equalled. A wonderful circumstance was, that the ship which bore the holy remains, was driven ashore by a storm at the place where lay the vineyard of the poor widow, whom St. John had undertaken to protect. The Emperor with his court, the Patriarch and all the clergy, and a countless multitude of people, went out to meet the precious relics, and accompanied them to the Cathedral of the city. There the body was seated on the Episcopal throne, and when the multitude cried out: "O holy

Father!" there was heard from its mouth "peace be with you." Then the Emperor asked the Saint's pardon for the injuries done him by his mother Eudoxia, and begged of him the grace that the fear-inspiring earthquake, which had been observed at the tomb of Eudoxia for as many as thirty-five years, might cease. From the instantaneous cessation of the earthquake the Emperor concluded that the holy Patriarch had heard his prayer. He buried the sacred body with the greatest splendor, and God glorified the tomb with many wonders.

What is more to be admired, in my opinion, than all the miracles wrought by this holy Doctor of the Church, is, in the first place, that heroic Christian courage which he evinced by punishing vice, even in persons of the highest rank, without heeding disgrace or persecution. In the second place, it is that constant fortitude with which he bore exile twice, and suffered the vexatious injuries and persecutions of his enemies. He was never seen impatient, never wavering, never timid. Even when an exile, he encouraged others by letter to be patient and virtuous. He consoled himself with the examples of holy Job, of the three friends of Daniel, and of others who had suffered much, as is manifest from his writings. In these certainly invaluable writings we learn to know the sublime virtues of this great Saint, especially his ardent love of God, his profound humility and generous contempt of temporal goods and honors, his more than fatherly care for his spiritual flock, his great and truly apostolic zeal for souls, united with untiring eagerness to root up vice and plant virtue in the hearts of his hearers, thus to lead them to heaven. These and many other virtues have made the life of this great Doctor of the Church glorious, and, consequently, he is, and ever shall be, held in the greatest veneration by all Christendom.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Chrysostom fearlessly punished the faults, abuses and vices which appeared in his flock, although he was on that account in many ways persecuted. Zeal for the welfare of his subjects urged him on to these measures of severity, with which he sought to better the morals of those entrusted to him. If you have others subject to you, do not allow faults or vices which you can prevent, to pass without correction. The love which you must have both for them and for yourself and your soul, demands such a line of conduct. Otherwise your subjects may, on account of the vices which you can hinder, be eternally lost, and you will be held responsible for their ruin. Such negligence will, moreover, endanger your own salvation, as you are guilty of those sins which you could hinder and did not do so. "Whoever can prevent sin or correct faults, becomes, without doubt, guilty of

them, if he fails to do so," says St. Gregory. Have a care, then, to correct the faults of your subjects, if you love them and your own soul.

II. "I fear nothing, except sin," said St. Chrysostom. What he said he practised, by neither approving of injustice nor shrinking from fulfilling his duty, even at the cost of suffering disgrace, deposition, and the persecution of his enemies. He feared neither the displeasure of crowned heads nor persecution unto death. He feared sin alone, by which God is offended: "I fear nothing except sin." And truly,

we should not fear anything else, as sin is the only evil which can do us harm. At the very least, we should fear sin more than all other evils, as it is greater than all we call evil, and the real source of evil. Sin alone can harm us for eternity. "It is evident," says St. Chrysostom, "that sin is the source of all evil. From sin comes war, sickness, persecution, and all that we have to suffer." What is the consequence? The Saint himself gives the answer: "We should fear only one thing, namely, sin. . . . All other things cannot hurt the soul."

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. RAYMOND OF PENNAFORT, CONFESSOR, AND ST. JAMES, THE PENITENT.

St. Raymond, sprung from the noble race of Pennafort, was born at Barcelona, in Catalonia, in the year 1175. Even in early childhood his only delight was in prayer and study, and when but a mere youth he was so advanced in learning as to be deservedly appointed to instruct others. Subsequently he devoted himself to canon and civil law, and soon excelled the most celebrated jurists of his time.

At Bologna he lectured publicly and gratuitously. At this time, Berengarius, Bishop of Barcelona, happening to pass through Bologna, and hearing of Raymond's wide-spread fame, persuaded him to return to his native land, where he first installed him as canon, subsequently, however, as provost. Nor did the Bishop hesitate to consult him in his most important affairs.

At the age of forty-four he entered the order of St. Dominic in which he soon acquired a great reputation for learning and piety. Pope Gregory the Ninth called him to Rome and chose him for his spiritual guide and confessor, of which duties he acquitted himself with remarkable modesty and frankness. Observing that many poor people visited the papal palace, in whose fate no one seemed to interest himself, Raymond imposed upon the Pope, as a penance, the duty of better providing for Christ's poor. The Pope, who tells this anecdote himself, loved Raymond

the more and valued him the more highly on this account, carefully regulating his manner of life according to the instructions of the Saint.

As some reward for his many services, the Holy Father wished to appoint him to the bishopric of Taragona; but Raymond steadfastly refused the proffered dignity, only begging to be dismissed from the papal court. In fact, his physicians had already decided that, if he wished to recover from a malady with which he was afflicted, he must seek his native air. Once more restored to his old home, he resumed his primitive fervor, in which he ever persevered. He wrote various instructions for the use of his neighbor, to whose eternal salvation he entirely devoted himself.

In the foundation of the Order for the Redemption of Captives he took no little part; for he too, like St. Peter, was admonished, in an apparition of our Lady, to interest himself in its cause. He compiled rules for those who wished to enter the order, received St. Peter as its first member, afterwards appointing him, with permission of the Holy See, its first general. Raymond himself was elected the third general in 1238, but hastened, after three years, to resign, preferring the quiet of the cloister, devoted to prayer, the writing of edifying books, and other such holy and useful occupations. He was looked upon by all as a model of Christian perfection, but he excelled especially in a wonderful humility, an obliging condescension to the poor, and a most childlike devotion to the Virgin Mother.

Many and remarkable are the miracles recorded of him, but the following, which is the most known, may suffice here. James the First, King of Arragon, had chosen St. Raymond for his confessor, and desired him to favor him with his company on a journey to the island of Majorca. But the king, incited by an unholy love for a certain woman, clandestinely conveyed her with him. Raymond had repeatedly and with holy zeal conjured the king to dismiss her, and James had even promised to comply with the holy man's request; but upon their arrival at Majorca the Saint, soon perceiving that the king had broken his promise, went up to him, and thus addressed him: "Your Majesty must either dismiss this person, or I shall be obliged to set sail for Barcelona to return to my cloister." The king, growing angry at this reproof, gave strict orders that no one should give passage to Raymond should he wish to return to Spain. The holy man, unconscious of the intrigues of the king, hastened to the sea-coast, where a vessel lay ready to sail. He sought for admission in vain, the officers showed him the royal

mandate in his regard. Full of confidence in God, the Saint stepped upon a huge rock that stretched far into the sea. After making the sign of the cross, he spread his cloak upon the water and mounted the same as if it were a seaworthy vessel. In vain did he press a fellow-Religious, who had followed him to the coast, but who now stood stupefied at this manner of sailing, to join him on his voyage. Raymond did not allow himself to be shaken in his purpose by the fright of his companion, but, placing his staff upright on his cloak, and gathering up the folds in front in the manner of a sail, he glided off, to the most profound astonishment of all present. He arrived safely in Barcelona within six hours after his departure, the distance being 160 miles. In the presence of a large concourse of people, he stepped ashore, and, throwing his perfectly dry cloak over his shoulders, he hurried to his monastery. There he lived for some time in great sanctity, and when he had almost reached his hundredth year, he slept quietly in the Lord, full of virtues and merits.



On to-day, likewise, mention is made in the Roman Martyrology of St. James the Penitent, who for forty years led a life of great austerity and sanctity in the desert. Having received from God the grace of expelling evil spirits from possessed persons, the daughter of a noble family was brought to him to be exorcised. James, by a short prayer, soon relieved her; but her parents, fearing that the evil spirit might possibly return soon again, entreated the Saint to keep the young lady for some time with him. James, after much solicitation, consented; and Satan took occasion to tempt him to the committal of a most shameful sin. The holy hermit resisted the wiles of the enemy for some time, but, gradually yielding, he accomplished the sinful deed. Nor did he end here. Fearing that his disgrace might be discovered, and impelled by the malice of the Evil One, he resolved to put his victim to death, which he accordingly did. Fear and trembling now seized upon him. He determined to abandon his solitude, and give himself up to every kind of debauchery, incited by the lying representations of the devil, who said that his sins would never be forgiven. Thus resolved, he set out for the adjacent city, when God, in His infinite mercy, sent an aged hermit across his path. The old man, learning the cause of James's flight, encouraged him to hope in the mercy of God, and exhorted him to do penance. Thus dissuaded from returning to the world, James entered into himself, retraced his

steps to the desert, not, however, to the spot he had abandoned. A most secluded cave was selected, where, confessing his sins most contritely, he began so austere a life that he soon merited to learn, by a miraculous revelation, that God had pardoned him. The power of working miracles was again granted him; nevertheless he continued daily to weep over his crimes. For ten years he practised the most severe penance, till, at the age of seventy-five, he died, a true model of contrition. His life, indeed, is an example of human frailty, of divine mercy, and sincere repentance.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. In the capacity of spiritual director, St. Raymond did not hesitate to admonish either Pope or King of their failings. It is the duty of confessors, in some circumstances, to warn their penitents lest both priest and penitent be brought to perdition. But it is the duty, too, of penitents to receive such lessons with a good grace, and endeavor to put them into practice. Woe to them who ridicule such instructions, or take occasion to murmur against the priests of God. Nor does it show a true repentance designedly to choose such guides as have not moral courage to speak out their mind. The same may be said of those who, leading a sinful life, are continually changing their confessor, fearing lest the one who knows their conscience the best would not absolve them. Take care not to class yourself with this sort of unfortunate people. Rather be persuaded that the spiritual director who candidly admonishes you of your faults, though it may wound your sensibility, will do you more good than one who is inclined to overlook your shortcomings. He who loves you will strive to correct your faults and endeavor to lead you to a more perfect life. Even should his paternal warnings touch you to the quick, they are still indications of love, for your welfare is in-

tended. It would be a true hatred of your soul not to hasten to its assistance when it is on the verge of destruction.

II. From the life of St. James you may learn to distrust yourself, even should you have led a long life of virtue. You are only human, and may fall as low as the greatest sinner. Walk, therefore, always in fear of the Lord, and keep a steady look out.

But learn, also, that no sinner is so great as not to obtain pardon, if he shows true signs of repentance. "Let no one despond: let not the remembrance of sins make any one despair of his salvation," writes St. Augustine. "Thy evil deeds," says St. Chrysostom, "have a measure; but the mercy of God is measureless. Thy evil deeds, however great they may be, are human; but the mercy of God is divine, and not circumscribed. What a drop of water is to the ocean, the wickedness of man is to the mercy of God—yea, much less; for the ocean, how deep soever it be, may be fathomed. Not so the mercy of God." This picture of God's mercy should not encourage you in sin, but prevent despair and move you to contrition, as I will explain further on. Should you designedly sin, presuming on the mercy of God, you would certainly come to a speedy ruin.

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES, BISHOP OF GENEVA.

St. Francis, a true apostle of the age in which he lived, a model of perfection, and a rare pattern for Bishops and Priests, was born in the castle of Sales (whence he took his name), in the year 1567. By his early piety and innocence, he gave unmistakable signs of future sanctity.

Having begun his studies at home, he continued them for six years at Paris. A course of canon and civil law at Padua completed his education. To an extraordinary progress in science he joined a blameless and a most edifying life. In order to preserve his innocence from the many dangers that surrounded him, he approached the Sacraments weekly, girded his loins with sharp instruments of penance, avoided all bad company, and vowed perpetual chastity before the shrine of the Blessed Virgin in the church of St. Stephen at Paris. This vow which he preserved unsullied to the end of his life, he renewed in the holy house of Loretto, which he visited with the greatest devotion.

On one occasion he was unwittingly led to the house of a woman of ill-fame. He no sooner observed her fondling and caressing than he spat in her face and saved himself by flight. With more difficulty did he free himself from a protracted temptation by which Satan endeavored to hurl him into despair, saying: "All the good works of De Sales will avail him nothing, for he is already a child of perdition," etc. Francis struggled valiantly; but as he was still unable to rid himself of despondent thoughts, in the agony of his heart he turned himself to God and thus addressed him: "If I am to be eternally lost after my death, let me at least, O my God, love Thee during this life." So forcible and loving an appeal put Satan to flight, and ever afterwards was Francis freed from these torments of the Evil one.

Soon after his return to his native land he received holy orders from the hands of Granerius, Bishop of Geneva, and subsequently was appointed provost of the Cathedral. The duties of the ministry now occupied his attention: for the Bishop employed him in preaching the Catholic doctrine in the neighboring towns and villages, as it was unsafe, even for the Bishop, to reside in Geneva on account of the fury of the heretics. The dangers, difficulties, and persecutions that Francis underwent at

this time are indescribable. The heretics who could not refute the logic of his arguments, hated and persecuted him in every imaginable way. They entered into a league against him, and even endeavored to take his life. God often protected him miraculously; so he feared no danger. He did not hesitate to enter Geneva, though in disguise, there to meet the notorious Theodore Beza, who, though seventy years of age, after the death of Calvin, became the leader of the heretics. Francis succeeded in convincing this unfortunate man of the truths of our doctrine; but Beza persistently closed his heart to the voice of his conscience—a fearful punishment inflicted by God on those who reject His holy inspirations. The apostolic labors of the Saint were crowned with more success on other occasions: for it is stated that seventy-two thousand heretics were converted by him to the Faith.

Such signal services deserved some reward. Accordingly upon the demise of Granerius, Francis succeeded him in the Bishoprick. It was then that his virtues shone forth with greatest lustre. His untiring zeal for souls impelled him to visit every spot of his extensive diocese on foot. In these visitations he aroused the faithful by sermons and fervid exhortations to the practice of good works. With a meekness truly admirable, he vividly pointed out the false doctrines of heretics, restored the ceremonies and practices of the Catholic Church, everywhere fulfilling the duties of a heroic apostle. He unhesitatingly entered into controversy with some of the more distinguished heretics, but they feared an encounter with him as they perceived the spirit that spoke within him. They were base enough to offer him poison, which he unconsciously took. But promising to perform a pilgrimage to a shrine of our Lady, he escaped all harm.

To render his ministrations more useful, he wrote various spiritual works which are much read and highly valued. The establishment of the Order of the Visitation, approved by the Holy See, and now spread to the farthest extremity of the earth, is a permanent effect of his zeal.

His last hour had now come. After twenty years spent in the untiring labor of the episcopate, it pleased God to call him to Himself. It was at Lyons, whither his duties had called him, and on the third day after Christmas, that a mortal disease seized upon him. It manifested itself first by a species of dizziness, which was soon succeeded by a paralysis of all his limbs. His tongue, however, was not affected. Seeing his end at hand, he requested that the last rites of the Church might be administered to him, which he received with the most tender devotion. Some Fathers of the Society of Jesus, with whom he had studied in Paris, and

whom he always held in high esteem, attended him in his last moments. To Father Anthony Possevinus, his confessor, he said: "You find me in a condition in which I stand in need of nothing but of the mercy of God. Do obtain this for me by your prayers." "It is well," he answered to some one who asked him whether he was satisfied with the disposition of Providence. "It is well to hope in the Lord. This hour has no terrors for me. God is my Lord and my Master. May He dispose of me as He thinks best." At another time, he cried out: "My God and my all. Not my will but Thy will be done." He also made a profession of Faith, protesting that he wished to die in no other than the Catholic Faith, asserting that it alone was the truth, out of which there was no salvation. During his illness, as he had done when in good health, he made frequent use of pious ejaculations, and these increased as his last hour approached. Upon being asked whether he did not dread the temptations and the power of Satan, he replied in the words of the Psalmist: "I hope in the Lord, He will save my feet from snares." His last words were: Jesus and Mary—and when in the Litany of the dying, the words "All ye Holy Innocents," etc., were pronounced, his pure soul departed from his undefiled body to join the company of those who incessantly follow the immaculate Lamb, in the contemplation of whom the blessed eternally rejoice. This happy death took place in the year of our Lord 1622, on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, when the Saint had reached his fifty-sixth year. To give an account of the miracles which before and after his death God worked through him, as well as to note his many virtues, would require a special volume. Suffice it here to say, that during his life, by the mere sign of the cross, he freed more than a hundred possessed persons, raised two dead bodies to life, cured three who were lame, and restored numberless sick persons to perfect health. After his death similar wonders were indefinitely multiplied.

In the annals of the Saints, we meet not with greater perfection than was practised by St. Francis. Perpetual self-abnegation was the foundation, and the perfection of his sanctity. He was naturally of an irritable disposition, yet he controlled this inclination to such an extent, that after his death, upon surgical inspection of his body, the gall of his system was found converted into a granular substance of a strong nature, the pebbles numbering three hundred, which the physicians ascribed to the violence exerted by Francis in conquering his impulses to anger. Never was an impatient word heard to escape his lips. The heretics even wondered at the extraordinary meekness which he manifested on all occasions. A ruffian once reviled him in a most

shameful manner. The Saint patiently listened to the end without answering a word. When afterwards questioned why he did not rebuke the villain, he replied: "I observed that the gall was rising within me and I have long since taken the resolution never to speak a word when I notice such an emotion, but to wait for some time, thereby punishing myself with greater effect." On another and similar occasion he thus spoke. "For twenty years have I now in such circumstances endeavored to show my patience. Should I at one breath lose the merit of all this practice?" Experience proved that by his gentle and meek reproofs, the Saint effected an extraordinary amount of good. His heroic victories over himself enkindled in his soul an affectionate love even for his most bitter enemies and persecutors. He said one day, with his accustomed frankness, that should some one, out of hatred and revenge, pluck out one of his eyes, he would still look lovingly upon the offender with the other; a convincing proof that St. Francis, by his continual self-denial, had reached the highest pinnacle of perfection recommended by our Lord.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Francis of Salés was by nature very much inclined to anger. Nevertheless he conquered himself to such an extent that an impatient word was never heard to pass his lips. As soon as he observed that anger was rising within him, he completely held his peace until his irritable impulses had passed away. Would that all men could imitate the saintly Bishop in this respect. How many grievous sins would be thereby avoided! For certain it is that anger, whence many serious offences take their rise, is one of the most dangerous of passions. It is not unfrequently made the scapegoat for many other sins; for it is often said that such a thing was the effect of anger—"Anger did it; my anger overcame me." But such excuses will not hold before God. What would you yourself say, if being mocked, insulted and slandered by your neighbor, he should excuse himself on the score of anger? Would you accept such

excuses? I think not. Take measures, then, against this passion, as St. Francis did: conquer yourself: hold your peace: weigh well your words, and consider your actions. Never punish in anger; wait till your wrath has subsided; then act as good common sense and the law of God require. St. Augustine gave the same advice, long ago, in the following words: "When you begin to grow angry, overcome yourself; postpone your remarks, as well as any punishment you may intend. When your soul is calm, then speak, then chastise. For anger must not precede but rather follow reason. And the Bible tells us how we should guard against any hastiness, whilst influenced by anger. "Every man must be eager to listen and slow to anger; for, the anger of man worketh not what is just before God." These words the Saint quotes from the Epistle of St. James.

II. During his sickness, and in his last moments, St. Francis made:

use of various short prayers which are called ejaculations. As he had made use of them during his whole life, it was easy for him to employ them on his death bed. You would no doubt like to exercise yourself in virtuous acts as your end draws nigh; to make acts of faith, hope and charity, of sorrow for your sins, etc., since these are the best means of overcoming the tempter. If your wish is sincere, you will now elicit such acts while you are in good health. Many holy persons do so, if not daily, at least at the end of the month, and then with special fervor. Oh! that you would do the same. What consolation and benefit you would derive therefrom in your last hour. Do not imagine that you will learn this holy practice on your death bed. Granted that you might possibly have such prayers read to you at that critical time, little or none will be the benefit or consolation you will derive there-

from if you have not previously and zealously exercised yourself in the holy practice we speak of. The best weapons—even the armor of the King himself, was at the disposal of David, when about to engage in combat with Goliath. Yet he confessed they were all useless to him, as he was not accustomed to them. He employed his sling—with this he fought, with this he conquered. Practices of virtue are the best weapons against the infernal Goliath. If you do not acquire skill in the use of them now, I fear that when the last battle is at hand you will do very little execution against your mortal enemy. St. Cassiodorus makes the following remarks: "If we do not acquire the art of warfare before the battle, we shall be sadly at a loss in the hour of danger. A soldier must learn in the time of peace what will be useful for him in the time of war."

THE THIRTIETH DAY OF JANUARY.

THE LIFE OF THE HOLY NUN ALDEGONDE, AND OF THE HOLY PRIEST AND MARTYR AQUILINUS.

The holy virgin Aldegonde, renowned for sanctity and miracles, was born in the year of our Lord 630. A scion of the then reigning King of France, and surrounded by all the fascinating but fleeting pleasures of the Court, she longed only for things imperishable, and despised the world with its vanities. Being absorbed, one day, in the meditation of heavenly things, she heard a voice which distinctly said to her: "Thou shalt have no other bridegroom than the Son of God." By these words her love for spotless purity was so much increased, that she offered up to God a vow of perpetual chastity. Hardly had she reached the age of thirteen, when the son of the King of England sued for her hand. The parents gave their consent immediately; but the virgin Aldegonde opposed them, saying: "I have already pledged my

truth to another bridegroom who is far more mighty and powerful and beautiful than the young Prince of England. Never shall I prove unfaithful to him." To her sister, who counselled her not to refuse this noble alliance, she made this reply: "You must know, dear sister, that I am determined rather to die than to lose my virginal purity."

Meanwhile her father died. Her mother insisted even more vehemently on this marriage than her father had done before; fixed the day of the wedding-feast, and made the necessary preparations for such a solemnity. Aldegonde put all her trust in God, fasted and prayed. She knew that God could prevent this union if He wished. And God did wish it; for the queen fell sick, and soon after exchanged time for eternity. The pious virgin lamented, indeed, the death of her parents, but recognized, at the same time, and praised the goodness of God which had so wonderfully helped her in her greatest need. She was, however, not yet entirely freed from danger. Endo, the Prince-royal, exhorted Aldegonde to fulfil the promises of her parents. But, she cleaved unflinchingly to her first resolve. In order not to be molested by any further allurements, and to avoid, in those rough times, falling a prey to brutal force, she sought her safety in flight. Prince Endo heard these tidings immediately, pursued her with his knights, and, riding without a pause, espied her at last from afar. He raised his mighty voice, commanding her to stand still. Aldegonde, however, hastened towards the next river, lifted up her eyes to heaven, prayed to God more with inward sighs than with words of mouth, and then filled with a holy confidence, she put her feet on the surface of the water. The Most High, who loves and protects chaste souls, showed by a miracle how pleasing to Him this action was; for He sent an angel who led Aldegonde across the torrent without moistening her feet. There she knelt down, thanking God; then she went to the saintly Bishop Amandus, told him all that had come to pass, and with tearful eyes, prayed to be admitted into a monastery. The Bishop gave ear to her petition, and received her among the servants of Christ.

Situate in the province of Hainaut, there was the wood Malbod, where Aldegonde had already hid herself on a former occasion, in order to preserve her virginity. Here she had a convent built, which she endowed out of her own possessions and then filled it with nuns, all of whom were zealous servants of the Lord. At the command of the holy Bishop Amandus, she assumed the office of prioress, the duties of which she discharged to the great advantage and benefit of her subjects. For she was the living pattern of all virtues; she mortified her body.

with all kinds of penitential works, persevered in long fastings and kept up long and prayerful night-watches. It was her greatest joy to do the meanest work. She showed so much devotion, modesty and reverence in her prayer as to resemble the angels. The poor beheld in her a true mother; all that was left after the finishing of the church and the monastery was bestowed upon them. To increase still more her merits, our Lord permitted that wicked men should speak ill of her and spread their slanders abroad. At first, the holy Abbess felt sorely grieved at this, because she knew, that in all this she was innocent, and, therefore, she prayed fervently to God to come to her rescue. Our Lord sent her an angel who consoled her, saying: "True patience combined with innocent persecution is the road leading straight to heaven."

Before her death, which she knew by divine revelation, she begged of God to permit her to suffer still more here below, in order to appear the richer before the face of His Majesty. God granted her desire, and ordained that she should be seized by a repulsive cancer, which, by spreading gradually over her body, caused her excruciating pains. She suffered all with a wonderful patience. When she was already on the point of death, Satan appeared to her, instilling into her mind thoughts of despondency, and said: "You have to suffer many more things before your death, and after all, you have no assurance of your salvation." With temptations like these did the enemy of mankind endeavor, for a long time, to bring about the ruin of this chosen soul. Nevertheless, all his arrows missed their aim, all his cunning proved a failure. For nothing could disturb the calmness and the serenity of the Saint's mind. With the simple but strong words: "God is my help; in Him I have hoped, and in Him I will hope forever," she brought to naught all the deceit of the evil spirit. Soon after she slept calmly and placidly in the Lord, being, like her Redeemer, only three-and-thirty years of age. Her sister Waltrude, prioress of another convent, saw at the moment when Aldegonde yielded up her blessed spirit, a numberless array of angels and virgins, headed by the Virgin Mary herself. This glorious host descended into the abode of Aldegonde and carried her spotless soul into the tabernacles of God. Her earthly remains were long preserved from corruption, and exhaled a most pleasing and exquisite odor. There are many miracles on record which testify to the sanctity of this holy virgin.



Saint Aquilinus, whose feast we yesterday commemorated, was born of noble parents in the year 784, at Wurzburg, in the Duchy of Franconia. Even when yet a student, he already evinced his zeal for preserving the Faith in all its purity. For, as several of his fellow-students made light of certain articles of Faith, he reprimanded them with great freedom, and showed them, at the same time, how far removed they were from the spirit and the teachings of the true Church. Invited to share and taste with his equals the enjoyments of youth, and to partake of the cup of pleasure, he invariably turned a deaf ear to these allurements, shunned all worldly-minded companions and bore patiently all their mockery and laughter. He made his higher studies at Cologne, leading constantly such an edifying life as to induce the Bishop of that city to make him a Canon of his Cathedral. After the lapse of a few years, he returned to his own country, sold all he had, and divided all the money among the poor. He went again to Cologne, where, after the death of the Bishop, the clergy strove to raise him to the episcopal dignity. But Saint Aquilinus fled and wended his way to Paris. There he found many that were stricken by the pest. He began to nurse all these poor victims with great charity, and continued in this work of brotherly love till the plague came to an end. The faithful of that city ascribed their being freed from this scourge to the prayers of St. Aquilinus, and honored him, even after his death as a patron against this terrible visitation. It was, however, not long before the citizens of Paris knew the worth of this saintly man. Certain it is, that on account of his great learning and sanctity, he was so highly esteemed that, at the death of their Bishop, the Parisians, in their turn, were anxious to behold in this man the chief pastor of their church. The Saint, on hearing this, fled a second time and went to Italy.

First he stayed for a short time at Pavia, thence he betook himself to Milan to venerate the relics of St. Ambrose, to whom he had a great devotion. In this city he found plenty of work for his ardent zeal; for, the heresy of the Arians had again gained ground there. So great was his success, and so many stray sheep did he bring back to the true fold, that it was manifest to every one, that the hand of God was with His servant. The leaders of the heretical party could not bear this, plotted against his life, and swore to kill him. As he was going, therefore, one morning, as was his wont, to the Church of St. Ambrose, the Arians, like raging wolves, rushed upon Aquilinus and beat him so mer-

cilessly, that they left him for dead. The Saint, however, revived, regained his health and finally announced with great zeal the true Gospel of Christ. His reasonings were so cogent and his arguments so solid, that the heretics were utterly confounded. Wherefore, they waylaid him again, and one of them thrusting a sword through his throat, caused him to fall down and expire shortly after. The Catholics carried the precious remains with becoming reverence into the Church of St. Lawrence, and buried them afterwards in a chapel of the same name. God made known the glory of this valiant champion of the Faith throughout the whole of Christendom.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Aldegonde led a very holy life. Still, when she was on the point of departing this life, the evil spirit belabored her with long and violent temptations. She, however, far from yielding, courageously fought with the enemy, and gave him an inglorious defeat. If such things happen in the green wood, what will happen in the dry? If Satan besets the Saints with snares so crafty, what must he not do to the tepid and the impious? Faithful servants of God will easily oppose Satan, and by the Divine assistance, gloriously conquer, because they have been accustomed to such struggles during their lifetime. But woe to those who, when in good health, make no endeavor to combat the temptations of Satan! They have just cause to fear their inability to do so in the final combat. Even after a worthy reception of the last Sacraments they are still in danger of yielding to temptation, of falling anew into sin, of dying in enmity with God, and of being lost forever. Why? Because they are accustomed to lend a willing ear to Satan's proposals, and to proffer him their obedience. This willingness is not removed by sickness, but is rather augmented. In the day of health they took no trouble to banish bad thoughts and suggestions; how then can they reasonably expect to do so in the hour of death, especially if they have not at any time learned how to combat the enemy? Weigh this well, and accustom yourself now to struggle manfully against Satan's suggestions, and God will give you the grace, which He granted St. Aldegonde, of victoriously combatting in the last moments.

II. St. Aquilinus paid no attention to the solicitations of his evil councillors. He avoided their presence, and was by no means pained by their ridicule and mockery. Follow his example, when you are tempted to evil, especially, as often happens, during the carnival season. Shut your ears to their seductions; fly their society; form no special intimacy with them; do not grow faint-hearted at their jests and scoffs, lest you perish with them in the fathomless abyss; and what advantage or consolation will their company afford you in hell? Listen to the warning of the Lord. "If sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them. If they shall say, 'Come with us' . . . my son, walk not thou with them, restrain thy foot from their paths; for their feet run to evil" (Prov. i. 10, 11, 15, 16).

If you neglect this admonition, frequent the society of the godless, and hearken to their suggestions and flatteries, rest assured that you will gradually be as steeped in wickedness as they are and fall with them into the depths of hell. God forbade the Israelites to hold unnecessary intercourse with Gentiles; they disobeyed this injunction; and what was the consequence? The Psalmist sorrow-

fully tells us: "They were mingled among the heathens and learned their works, and served their idols, and it became a stumbling-block to them" (Ps. cv. 35.) Thus we rush to ruin when we communicate with the servants of Satan, willingly treat with them, and encourage by our acquiescence their caresses and adulations. "Consent not to them," if you prize your immortal soul.

THIRTY-FIRST DAY OF JANUARY.

ST. PETER NOLASCO, CONFESSOR: ST. MARCELLA, WIDOW.

St. Peter, founder of the Order of the most holy Virgin Mary, for the redemption of captives, was born at Recaudo, near Carcasson, an Episcopal See in Languedoc, France, in the year of Christ 1190. His family belonged to the noble house of Nolasco. Even when a child he wept on seeing a poor person, and could be consoled only by giving him some alms for the distressed. When he became of age he divided the inheritance bequeathed him by his parents among the poor. Without neglecting the practice of virtue, he industriously and perseveringly applied himself to his studies. His anxiety to preserve his baptismal robe unspotted, and to act as a true servant of his Lord, made him avoid the least sin,* for he feared that any negligence would dampen his fervor in the service of God, and lead to more grievous sins. Having at an early age been deprived of his parents, he withdrew to Spain, to escape the contagion of the Albigenian heresy, which had already devastated many parts of France. For a long time he occupied the post of tutor to James, the heir apparent to the crown of Aragon, and while at Barcelona he wore the livery of Christ beneath the robes of State.

The miserable condition of the Christians who were in captivity under the Moors and other enemies of the Christian name, as well as their imminent danger of losing the Faith, deeply touched his heart: he therefore gave up all his goods and possessions for their ransom, and expressed his wish to be himself sold for their sakes, or held captive in their stead. His generosity

was rewarded at one time with the liberation of three hundred Christian slaves. On the following night, while he was engaged in prayer, and considering how he could rescue others from their sad fate, the Mother of God appeared to him, commended his generosity, and told him that it would be highly pleasing to her Divine Son and to herself, if he would found a Religious Order whose chief aim should be the redemption of captives. Peter gave an account of this apparition to St. Raymond of Pennafort, his confessor, who also had a similar vision on the same night. Both of them then went to the King, James, and found that he had already been informed of Heaven's will by the Queen of heaven. As they could no longer doubt the designs of God, they eagerly set about the prosecution of so holy a work. Raymond wrote rules for the new Order, and Peter, who received at his hands in the Church of the Holy Cross, the habit which they had adopted, was named its first General. Besides the three customary vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, this Order binds itself to a fourth, which consists in the readiness of each of its members to offer himself as a substitute for any Christian captive, if it be deemed necessary. This Order, so well deserving of the highest appreciation, was at first exposed to violent persecutions; but Peter overcame all opposition, and, before the end of his life, had the consolation of witnessing a great number of generous souls in different monasteries, devoted heart and soul to so noble a work. When the persecution was at its height, he addressed his disciples: "Let us fear and praise God: He has the hearts of men in His hands, and can bend them as He wishes," Peter governed his Order for thirty years, within which time he opened their prison doors to thousands of captives, whom his own incessant labors, joined with those of his disciples, rescued from a miserable fate, and, in all probability, from eternal death.

Before his death, he called his children to his bedside, and exhorted them to perseverance in their love for captives. His last words were those of the Psalmist: "I will praise Thee, O Lord, who hast sent redemption to Thy people." Previous to this hour he had long and ardently cherished the desire of visiting the tomb of his patron, the Prince of the Apostles, whose name he bore, and was saddened at not finding an opportunity to execute his project. But now this holy Apostle appeared to him and addressed him: "Not all of our pious desires can be fulfilled. God is, however, satisfied with the intention. I know your longing to visit me at Rome; but such is not the good pleasure of the Lord. Yet, because you cannot visit me, I have now come to see you, and to assure you of my assistance till your last breath." St. Peter Nolasco obtained a similar favor from his Guardian Angel

and other Saints, who visibly appeared to him, no doubt to reward his special devotion to them. But Mary, the Queen of all Saints, gave him special proofs of her love and esteem. He saw her in person several times, and was filled with such sweet joy and consolation at her promise always to befriend him, that he cried out ecstatically at his last hour: "O how sweet it is to die under the protection of Mary." He expired in the year 1256.



To-day St. Marcella, also, a Roman widow, and a beautiful example of virtue to all Christian widows, is honored by the Catholic Church. She belonged to the highest nobility of Rome, and lost her husband seven months after her marriage. As she was still very young, of handsome features, and of immense wealth, her hand was again sought in marriage by many admirers, and especially by the prefect of Rome. But she had resolved not only to live for the future in the chastity of widowhood, but also to form her life according to the directions, which St. Paul gives to widows, for the attainment of perfection. She soon put aside all her ornaments and costly garments, kept aloof from the pleasures of the world, from idle conversations and gossip, lived wholly in quiet and solitude, and occupied herself with nothing but prayer, reading spiritual books, and labor. She repeatedly avowed that prayer and reading gave her far more consolation and pleasure than all her former worldly amusements. The poor and the needy fell heirs to the greatest part of her possessions. She herself lived very moderately, never even tasting any flesh meat or other delicate viands. At Easter she visited with the greatest devotion the churches and tombs of the holy Apostles and Martyrs, and labored to reproduce in herself the image of their virtues. On learning from St. Athanasius that many persons of both sexes in the Holy Land led spiritual and austere lives in the desert and the cloister, she resolved to copy their mode of life, and clothed herself as a Nun, being the first Roman lady to adopt the Religious dress. The scoffs and the ridicule, which her new practices occasioned, she bore with remarkable humility, and generously persevered in the state which she had so nobly begun.

When Rome was taken, plundered, and laid waste by Alaric, King of the Goths, some soldiers rushed into the house of the holy widow, and demanded her hidden treasures; but as she showed them her black habit, and protested that she had no hidden treasures, she was mercilessly beaten by the barbarians, and with a tender maiden, by the name of Principia, dragged through

the streets and imprisoned in the Church of St. Paul. Marcella was filled with joy at the thought that she had become so poor for Christ's sake, as to possess nothing of which she could be robbed. She praised and thanked the Lord for having given her an opportunity to suffer, and frequently repeated these words of holy Job: "As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job i. 21). Several days after, she suddenly laid her head in the arms of Principia, and, without the least symptoms of illness, her countenance beaming with joy, gave up her spirit. Her death happened in the year 410, when the ruthless Alaric was desolating the city of Rome and the surrounding territory. The holy Doctor, St. Jerome, has descanted freely in her praise, and holds up her life as a mirror to all widows, in which many may view with shame their own disorders.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Peter fled in abhorrence from the least sin, through fear of growing lax in the service of God and of falling a prey to more glaring and serious crimes. Happiness for all eternity essentially depends on flight from all grievous offences; for the commission of even one, forever debars us from the joys of heaven. Venial sins do not, it is true, exclude us from the portals of Paradise; but they cause us to relax by degrees in God's service, and carelessness in this point gradually leads to serious faults, which will imperil our eternal happiness. Imprint in your mind a truth so terrible, yet so certain, and after the example of St. Peter Nolasco, cherish a just horror of every venial sin, especially such as imply previous deliberation. "In temporal matters," writes St. Ephrem, "a trivial circumstance is often the cause of a great, overwhelming misfortune. A small oversight is an occasion of irremediable disaster. A small spark may generate a great conflagration. It is the same with venial sins, which we are apt to disregard: they are followed by deadly crimes, ir-

reparable loss and eternal ruin, not indeed at once, but by degrees. The unmistakable testimony of Holy Writ on the same point is positive and explicit: "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little" (Eccl. xix. 1) into the depths of grievous sin, yea, into the abyss of hell. He who is sensible, smothers the little spark, lest it rise into a great flame; so the man who is eager for his eternal salvation, shuns and abhors venial offences, that he may not fall into grievous sins and be ruined forever. "If we do not attend to slight faults, we shall imperceptibly commit greater offences," says St. Gregory.

II. The holy widow Marcella exhibited as intense a fervor in the practice of good works, as she had an heroic and invincible patience in the midst of opposition. The former, now clearly appreciated, gave her more pleasure than had the false joys of the world; the latter enabled her to confide in the Lord alone and to give Him due praise. Not only Christian widows, but also all who are desirous of their salvation, should strive to imitate her in both these

respects, for they are both necessary for salvation. Begin this very day with their practice. In misfortune submit to the decrees and dispensations of Divine Providence. Bear your sufferings with patience, and apply to yourself the words of holy Job, which St. Marcella so frequently repeated. "As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Be zealous and persevering in the practice of good works, and abide by the warning of St. Peter to all Christians. "Wherefore, brethren, labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election" (I. Peter i. 10). Mark that, he says that by good works we

must secure our calling and election to everlasting happiness. As our Lord Himself assures us, good works are the key to the treasure of eternal life, deposited in heaven, and there to be enjoyed forever. As eager as the children of the world are to lay up temporal treasures, by the accumulation of gold and money; so industrious should you be in laying up a heavenly treasure by the practice of good works: "Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal," says the Lord (Matt. vi. 20).

A MONTHLY RECOLLECTION FOR THE CHRISTIAN READER.

To-day has brought the first month of the year to a close. The end of each month should remind all of us of our last hour. This recollection should serve as a warning that we should always hold ourselves in readiness for the approach of death. It is in keeping with the warning of Jesus Christ Himself. "Be you ready, because at what hour you know not, the Son of Man will come" (Matt. xxiv. 44). To defer preparation till death stares us in the face, is highly hazardous and proves beneficial to scarcely one out of a thousand sinners. Preparations should be of earlier date; for Christ says: "Be you ready." General or remote preparation consists in leading the life of a true Christian. Special exercises constitute the monthly preparation. I would advise you, to join the Confraternity of a good death (*Bona Mors*).—Many fervent Christians are enrolled in this most useful Confraternity, or at least they make use of a monthly

preparation for a good death. Several works have also been published, which treat of these monthly exercises; but because all our readers are not in possession of them, we, shall present them with a few suggestions which will facilitate this preparation.

On the last Sunday or Feast-day of the month, choose an hour both before and after noon, during which you should endeavor to banish every care and thought which may distract your attention from the consideration of points touching your soul's eternal interests and your preparation for death. During this hour, consider attentively:

I. The benefits which you have received from the Lord this month, whether they are temporal or spiritual, especially those which may have been denied to other men. To descend to particulars, weigh well the grace of preservation from death up to this hour, from the commission of grievous

sins, or from dying in the state of mortal sin. Let acts of fervent gratitude to God for the multiplied favors of the month follow this reflection, and offer Him in thanksgiving all the honor which he has received throughout the whole of Christendom, during the same period.

II. Beg God for light to penetrate the state of your soul by a careful examination of your conscience.

III. Carefully examine how you have spent the month, or what kind of life you have led. Consider your relation to God, to your neighbor and to yourself. Try yourself by these three points in a special manner. 1. Have you scrupulously avoided sin? Into what particular faults have you fallen? 2. Have you exercised yourself in good works, especially in prayer, in visits to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, in attendance at Mass, and at the Sunday sermon; in the observance of fast on days prescribed by the Church; in compassion for the needy and unfortunate? 3. With what patience have you submitted to contradictions, evil reports, and persecutions?

IV. Awaken in your heart lively sentiments of deep sorrow for your tepidity in the service of God and for all the sins which you have committed. Implore God's pardon with every sign of humility, and offer Him in satisfaction, all the works of penance, performed by the truly penitent during the month, together with the infinite labors and merits of Jesus Christ. Then take the firm resolution to confess your sins at the first opportunity with heartfelt sincerity, and to reform your life during the coming month.

Finally, entreat the Divine Majesty to assist you with His powerful grace and through the mediation of

His holy Mother and of your Patron Saints, that your good resolutions may be carried out in practice.

This exercise can be performed during the space of one hour on the last Sunday of the month or on any week day, without serious inconvenience. On the first day, or, as being more convenient, on the first Sunday or Solemnity of the new month, set apart an hour, which may be spent in the following exercise:

I. Consider the great goodness of the Lord, who has permitted you to witness the opening of the new month, while thousands of others have been summoned to the judgment-seat of God, where many of them, who appeared fettered with the chains of deadly sins, have heard from His lips the just sentence of eternal reprobation. Perhaps you had merited the same fate, on account of your sinful use of the time granted you in that month, or your frequent offences against so good a God. The Lord God—mark well, the God whom you have so frequently dishonored, has spared you, and given you a new month wherein to work out your salvation and escape the flames of hell. Now thank so generous a God, so incomparable in His goodness, from the depths of your soul for the great mercy which you have received.

II. Seriously reflect on the manner in which you should co-operate with God's grace, to pass this month consistently with His designs in preserving your life. His end is that you should do real penance for your past sins, set about a genuine reformation in your entire conduct, carefully shun the least fault, devote more time to good works, bear your crosses and sufferings with greater resignation, seize more eagerly the advantages which you formerly slighted, and by these means more

seriously work out your salvation. Beg of him the grace to know how you may accomplish His designs, and direct your life for the future, even from the present day.

III. Ponder how you should conduct yourself during the month upon which you have just entered, towards God, your neighbor, and yourself; see what sins need special precaution, what special bad habits need correction, and what means you should employ in both cases; determine the kinds of pious exercises you will adopt, as well as the method to be followed. Thus, you should have fixed times and methods of prayer, of hearing Mass and sermons, of frequenting the Sacraments, of observing the prescribed fasts, of assisting the unfortunate. Endeavor, also, to foresee how you should be disposed towards the trials, which the Lord may send you during the month.

While engaged on this point particularize the resolutions which you should strive to keep with minute exactness during the month. Place them at the feet of your crucified Jesus, and as human frailty may prevent you from their observance, turn with childlike confidence to your merciful Lord, and humbly crave His assistance in the struggle. To this end offer Him all the good works which will be done throughout the world during the month. In fine, lay the key-stone of your hour's exercise by renewing your pledge of devotion to the Queen of heaven and your holy Patrons, and imploring their intercession, that

you may execute your good resolves and zealously labor during the whole month in the promotion of the Divine honor, and of your soul's eternal interests.

Here you have a short, easy, but very fruitful method of preparing yourself monthly for death; for the first hour serves for the purification of your conscience, the second for leading a holy, Christian life. These two parts make up the substance and the exercise of a true preparation for death. But because it is also necessary, or at least very useful to make frequent and fervent use of holy aspirations, which are important and essential on your death-bed, I advise you to put them into practice on the same or the day following the above exercise, and to offer them to the Lord in anticipation of that last hour, when either the intensity of your sufferings, the want of time, or other circumstances may be an obstacle to your devotion. You should take up the crucifix, place it before you as if you were in your last agony, and fervently repeat these acts, which in the hour of death, you would desire to pour out, such as Acts of Faith, Hope, Love, Contrition, Resignation to the will of God, Desire of Heavenly Bliss, and Confidence: good books of devotion may be of use to you in this exercise. If you dearly love your soul, and earnestly desire the quiet and the bliss of your heavenly home, do not, I pray you, neglect so easy and so advantageous a method of monthly preparation for death.

FIRST DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. IGNATIUS, BISHOP AND MARTYR, AND ST. EPHREM, CONFESSOR.

St. Ignatius, a disciple of the Apostles, but more particularly of St. John, lived in the first century of the Christian Era. His surname was Theophorus—that is, a man who carries God in his heart. That he was a man of great piety, is evident from the fact that he became Bishop of the city in which St. Peter had first established his See, in which he was succeeded by St. Evodius. I speak of Antioch, where the believers, heretofore called “disciples,” first received the name of “Christians.” For forty years this holy Bishop presided over the Church of Antioch, with so much wisdom and such unceasing solicitude, that he not only became widely known, but his counsel, on many occasions, was sought by all the Bishops in Syria. At the time of the persecution of Domitian, he remained with his flock, exhorting them to continue steadfast in the true Faith; but, for himself, he desired nothing so much as to shed his blood for Christ’s sake. Besides firmness in faith, he most earnestly preached to those committed to his charge obedience to the Bishops and Priests and the avoidance of heretics. “Be obedient to the Priests and Bishops,” said he, “but shun the heretics as wild beasts, that approach unawares, and wound you in such a manner that you cannot be easily healed.”

While St. Ignatius was thus anxiously occupied with the salvation of his flock, the Emperor Trajan came to Antioch, full of vain pride on account of the victory he had just won over the Parthians. Having been informed that St. Ignatius was the greatest enemy of the gods of the Empire, as well as the principal protector of Christianity, he had the Bishop brought before him. He asked if what had been reported of him was true. Undauntedly the Saint replied: “I pray to the only true God, and how happy would you and the whole Empire be if you believed in Him also! The gods whom you worship are devils: I cannot pray to them.” Trajan, interrupting him, said: “There is no time now to dispute;—sacrifice to my gods, and I will make you High Priest of Jupiter and a member of the Imperial Council. If you refuse, you shall die the most cruel death.” “I am a Priest of the Most High, to whom I daily offer a sacrifice,” replied St. Ignatius; “and blessed indeed should I consider myself were I to be sacrificed to His glory.” Trajan, enraged,

immediately condemned him to die, giving this order: "Ignatius shall be conducted, bound, to Rome, and there become a prey to wild beasts."

Never did criminal, condemned to die, manifest such joy on hearing that he was pardoned as did St. Ignatius when he heard the imperial sentence that doomed him to so dreadful a death. He exclaimed, with a loud voice, "I thank Thee, O Lord, for vouchsafing me the happiness of offering my life as a proof of my great love to Thee!" Having kissed the chains which were to deprive him of liberty, he joyfully extended his hands to be shackled. After praying with many tears for the Church, he bade farewell to his flock, consoling them most tenderly, and once more earnestly besought them to remain constant in their faith. Two deacons accompanied him to Rome. But what the holy Bishop suffered in his long journey over land and sea, from the brutality of the soldiers whose prisoner he was, words fail to tell. Neither can the heroic patience which he manifested be described, nor how unceasingly and ardently he longed to become a victim for his faith. Whenever he approached a city the Christians, with their Bishops, came to meet him. He received them most affectionately, humbly entreating them to pray that God would give him grace to pass happily through his martyrdom. At Smyrna he was greeted by St. Polycarp, his most intimate friend, who had been a disciple of St. John with him. It will be more easy to imagine than describe the great consolation that these two holy men found in each other. From this city as well as from several other places, the holy Bishop wrote letters to the different churches, giving to all the most pious instructions, and declaring his eagerness to be immolated for his Lord's sake. He found also in Smyrna several men from Ephesus, who were on their way to Rome, and as they would arrive there before him, he gave them a letter to the Christians living there, in which he most humbly besought them not to supplicate heaven for his life, and thus deprive him of the crown of martyrdom. Thus, in this letter, he again revealed his fervent desire to suffer and die for his God.

At length, after indescribable torments, the holy Bishop arrived at Rome. The faithful came in crowds to meet him, weeping bitterly while they saluted him. But he appeared more cheerful than ever, and, kneeling down in the midst of them, he prayed for the Christian Church, and offered himself as a sacrifice to the Son of the Almighty.

The Roman Book of Martyrs relates further that the holy Bishop was most barbarously tortured in Rome before he was thrown to the lions, but in what these tortures consisted is not

known. Incontestible, however, is the fact that, on being brought into the amphitheatre, where innumerable people were present to witness his death, he addressed the multitude, saying that he, as a Christian Bishop, had been brought thither because he longed to suffer and die for Christ. Having said this, he prayed, and earnestly supplicated God not to prevent the wild beasts from destroying him, as had often happened to other Christians. As soon as the roaring of the lions was heard, he cried aloud: "I am the grain of Christ. I shall be ground by the teeth of these wild beasts, and so become the pure bread of Christ!" While he thus spoke they let the lions loose, which fiercely bounded towards the Saint, who while repeating the holy name of Jesus, was torn in pieces. The lions devoured him instantly, leaving only his bones, which were gathered by the faithful and brought to Antioch, where they were received by the Christians with the greatest honors. They were deposited with as much solemnity as circumstances would permit, in a sanctuary devoted to that purpose, and they were held in great honor by all believing in the true Faith.



Under this day's date is also mentioned, in the Roman Book of Martyrs, St. Ephrem, a deacon of the church of Edessa, in Syria; and great praise is bestowed on his wisdom and virtue, as well as his labor in behalf of the Christian Faith. His work consisted partly in verbally teaching the Christians and partly in refuting the doctrines of the heretics, whose leader and teacher he boldly opposed and publicly confuted. Apollinarius, an arch-heretic, had written his heresy in two books, and had given them into the charge of a notable woman of his party. Ephrem, having become acquainted with this woman, requested the loan of these books, as he wished to study thoroughly the doctrine of Apollinarius. The woman, who thought that Ephrem desired to adopt these doctrines, permitted him to have the books. As soon, however, as the Saint became convinced of the impiety of the work, he pasted the leaves together in such a manner that they could not be separated. He then returned the books to the woman, who did not perceive what he had done, as the outside was unimpaired. Just at this time it happened that Apollinarius was called to a public disputation. As he, on account of his defective memory, was unable to speak much, he had his books brought, in order that one of his followers might read his doctrines out of them. The books are brought, the heretic proceeds to open them, but finds the leaves are pasted together, and

that in consequence they are of no service to him. Unable to dispute verbally, he stood for a long time immovable, deeply ashamed. At last he ran away, and, not long after this event, expired most miserably. As far as the teachings of St. Ephrem are concerned, they exist to this hour in the splendid works he has left. In former times they were so highly esteemed that they were read aloud in the churches, after the Gospel, for the edification of the people. In these works much is to be found that the holy man said in praise of the Blessed Virgin, as also many prayers in which he invoked her: a proof that already, in the first centuries, the Mother of our Saviour was honored and invoked. His sanctity is demonstrated in the many virtues with which he was endowed, amongst which chastity, deep humility, and untiring benevolence towards the poor, shine most brilliantly.

One day an immoral woman tried to seduce him. Ephrem seemed to lend her a willing ear, and said: "If I consent to fulfil your desire, you must consent that I select the place for our meeting." "Where shall it be? Where shall we meet?" asked the shameless woman. "In the public market," replied he. "Oh! not there," said she; "we should be ashamed of the people who are there." This was the answer that the pure servant of God wished to obtain, and he said to her, full of deep earnestness: "Unhappy woman! when the eyes of men are upon you, you are ashamed and will not commit evil; why, then, are you not ashamed of the Lord your God, who is everywhere, and who not only sees and knows everything, but who also punishes with the everlasting fire of hell all vices? How much more should His presence deter you from the commission of sin?"

It needed no more to bring the unchaste woman to the knowledge and repentance of her corruption. Ephrem placed her in a convent, where she did most severe penance until her death, never weary of thanking him again and again for the benevolence he had shown to her. Just as the holy man, on this occasion, evinced his love of purity, so he manifested, on many others, his deep humility. When it was intended to elect him Bishop, he, to evade this dignity, pretended insanity, and, hiding in a corner, remained until another was elected. So far from valuing the praises of men, he even regarded those who lauded him as his enemies, while he loved, as his best friends, those who despised him. In his last will he ordered that he should not be honored with music, or a costly shroud, or a panegyric; neither did he desire to be buried in a church, but requested to be laid among the poor, to whom he had been more attached than a father to

his children. During a great famine, he himself collected from the wealthy corn and other provisions, divided them among the starving people, and assisted them wherever he could, day and night, with untiring kindness. Many other instances of his great charity, which are recorded by the holy fathers, Gregory of Nissa, Basil, Chrysostom, and Jerome, I have to pass over. Only one more will I mention, which the Saint related of himself. When a boy, his parents one day sent him somewhere out of the city. Passing through a wood, he saw a cow, belonging to a poor man. Out of mischief, he pelted her so long with stones that she fell to the ground, dead. Four weeks later, his parents sent him again out of the city. Night overtook him on the road, and the shepherds, whose flock was in the wood, having compassion on him, invited him into their hut, with the understanding that he should continue his journey on the following day. Ephrem accepted the offered hospitality and remained with them through the night. But just before morning the sheep of those men were attacked by wolves and widely dispersed. The shepherds believing that this was the work of thieves, and that Ephrem was one of them, made him prisoner and brought him before the judge, who immediately ordered him to be thrown into prison. At the same time two other men were also incarcerated, of whom one was charged with homicide, the other with adultery. Ephrem wept bitter tears at suffering thus innocently. After forty days his Guardian Angel appeared to him, and asked what he was doing there. Ephrem related to him the circumstances, and declared his innocence. The Angel said: "I know that you are innocent, but the cruelty with which, some time ago, you treated the cow of a poor man is also known to me. Therefore you must atone for that wrong now, just as those two men, who are also innocent of the crimes for which they are imprisoned, suffer this present punishment for sins formerly committed. Learn from this that God is just, and that He leaves no evil deed unpunished." Ephrem, coming thus to the knowledge of his fault, repented, and received a promise that he should be set free; and, in fact, soon after regained his liberty. This event induced him to devote himself entirely to the service of the Almighty.

Ripe in years, he ended his holy life A.D. 378.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Ignatius desired nothing more ardently than to suffer and die for the sake of Jesus Christ. The source of this desire was the</p>	<p>Saint's adoration of the crucified God, which he derived from contemplating the inconceivable love which moved Jesus to suffer</p>
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and die for us. Therefore, was he often heard to say, "My love is the crucified God." Can you likewise say, in sincerity, that the crucified God is your love, or the only object of your devotion? Ah! until now it most certainly has not been thus. A contemptible human being, a short-lived pleasure, a temporal profit, a sinful delight, you have loved more than your Saviour. Oh, shame! Has not Jesus, who loved so much that He suffered death upon the cross for you, deserved to be loved far above everything and beyond everybody? Devote yourself to Him from this hour, and show by your deeds that you love Him. This is done when you remain constant to your crucified God, and when you allow no sin to separate you from Him. Tell me who, at the time the Crucifixion took place, showed by deeds that they loved Christ? Certainly not the heathens, nor the Jews, neither Scribes nor Pharisees, not even the Apostles themselves, one only excepted. For the heathens crucified Christ, the Jews derided and scorned and helped to crucify Him; the Apostles deserted Him—yes, one of them even sold Him, and another denied him! These were no tokens of love. Only St. John, Mary, the Holy Mother, and a few other saintly women, showed by deeds their love for the crucified Christ. They did not leave Him in His hour of bitter trial, and much less did they deride Him, scorn Him, or assist in crucifying Him, as so many others. And just such tokens of love I require of you, especially during the time of the so-called Carnival, as being the time when your Saviour is not only again derided, scorned, and crucified by many sinners, but even, in many places, deserted and denied by His Apostles—that is, by those who,

during the year, were zealous in serving Him. Remain, during that period, with your Jesus; do not separate yourself from Him by sin; leave Him not. In this way you can show by your actions that you love Him truly. The thought alone that Christ suffered so much for you should be sufficient to incite you to this. He has so fervently loved you, and showed so plainly His love in deeds: why will you not, in like manner, return His love, and manifest it also in visible deeds?

II. St. Ephrem prevents an evil person from sin, and converts her by calling to mind the omnipresence of the Almighty. Besides the remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ, the thought of the omnipresence of God is one of the most powerful incentives to induce you to repentance and guard you against sin. Keep it in your memory as long as you live, but particularly at the time of which I have just spoken. Satan has infatuated many persons to such an extent that they imagine, and are even not ashamed to say it, "At the time of Carnival much more is allowed than at any other part of the year. Everything is permitted." They seem to suppose that God turns away His face and heeds not their evil deeds. Ah! do not listen to such shameful whispers of the infernal serpent. The God who at all other times knows, sees, and hears everything, hears, sees, and knows not less at the time of Carnival. And as He at all other times allows no evil to pass unpunished, even so will He punish evil deeds committed at the time of Carnival. At this season, as at any other, He may call you away in your sins to everlasting perdition. "He has given to no man license to sin," is said in the Bible (Eccles-

iastes, 15th chapter). And what is written there remains for ever true. "For acting wickedly against the laws of God doth not pass unpunished" (II. Mac. iv.).

No matter at what time a man breaks God's laws and commits sin, he surely will not go unpunished, because it is never permitted to commit sin or to break the laws of God. It is, therefore, only the Evil One who persuades many persons that everything will pass at the time of Carnival—that is, if we understand these words as the Carnival-sinners do, viz., that to sin is allowed at this time and remains unpunished. In another sense they are true, for everything that at such

time we think, speak, do, seek, or enjoy, passes away and comes to an end. The pleasures that we indulge in, even by offending God, pass away and vanish. The priceless time that God has given us to work out our salvation soon passes away and never returns. With many, also the conscience, the grace of God, the soul, and future happiness are lost, perhaps for all eternity. Everything passes away, but the reckoning and the accountability to God pass not away: the punishment remains; for it is and ever will be the truth that "To act against the law of God will not pass unpunished."

SECOND DAY OF FEBRUARY.

PURIFICATION, OR CANDLEMAS-DAY.

The festival of to-day is called Candlemas, or the Purification of Mary; but it might also truthfully be called the Offering of Jesus in the Temple. It received the first name from the candles which to-day are blessed and carried round in commemoration of Jesus Christ, the true light of the world, who was carried by His Virgin Mother and St. Joseph to the Temple, and there received into the arms of the old, righteous Simeon, by whom he was called a light to illumine the people. The second name was given to it because the Blessed Virgin complied voluntarily with the law which God had given concerning the purification of women after child-birth. That it may likewise be called the Feast of the Offering of Christ in the Temple, is not only plain from what happened upon that occasion, but also from a prayer of the Church during Mass, which says: "Great, eternal God, we beseech Thy Majesty that as Thy only begotten Son is to-day offered in the Temple in the substance of our flesh, grant that we also may be offered to Thee in the spirit with purified hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

To comprehend this better, it is necessary to remember that God had given two particular laws in the Old Testament. First,

that a woman after having given birth to a male child was considered unclean, and during a period of forty days, was not allowed to touch anything sacred, nor even to enter the Temple. At the expiration of this time, the mother was to go with her child to the Temple, bringing a lamb and a young pigeon or turtle-dove as an offering. When, however, the woman was too poor to offer a lamb, no more was required than two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, which she gave to the Priest, who, offering them to God, prayed for the woman. The woman was thus cleansed of her impurity. The second law obliged the mother to offer to God in the Temple, her first-born son; but if he was not of the tribe of Levi she redeemed him with a certain piece of money. It is evident that the Blessed Virgin was neither compelled to obey the first nor the second of these ordinances, as having neither conceived nor brought forth like other women, she remained spotless in her virginity. But she, nevertheless, complied with both laws, and repaired to the Temple forty days after the birth of the Saviour, standing among the women whom the law called unclean, as if she also required to be purified. She offered to God, instead of a lamb, two turtle-doves, took her Divine Son in her arms and presented Him to the Heavenly Father as an oblation. Christ Himself, who, according to the testimony of St. Paul, had sacrificed Himself to His Heavenly Father soon after His incarnation, renewed it to-day for the accomplishment of all He was ordained to suffer, in order to redeem the world. What we must above all else admire in this event is the deep humility and perfect obedience of the Holy Mother. She was, as remarked above, not subject to the law of purification, as she was neither defiled by the conception nor by the birth of Christ, but desiring to show perfect obedience to God, she submitted to this law. She complied with what it would have been no wrong to omit: she even did more than the law required. How beautiful an example of perfect and spontaneous obedience! Mary was the most pure and spotless Virgin, both before and after Christ's birth, and yet she presents herself to be purified like other women, who, after the law, are unclean. Mary was blessed above all women, and therefore stood high above them, and yet she mingled with them as though she had been one of them. Not only did she not wish to be esteemed as the one she in reality was, but desired to be recognized as one she was not: so far was she from all self-elation, pride and haughtiness. Besides this, she made the offering of the poor; instead of a lamb, two turtle-doves: thus confessing her poverty without shame, although she knew that she was descended from royal blood. What splendid examples of humility! This perfect

obedience and this profound lowliness of Mary, convicts, and ought to cover with shame all those who, on account of real or fancied greatness, deem themselves above others, or who by reason of the nobility of their name, their wealth, or some other cause, think themselves free from their obligations to God and the Church. Still more, however, it condemns those who, aware of their responsibility, still do not keep the laws prescribed by God, but are always ready with reasons to evade them to their own destruction.

Not thus acted Mary. She humbled herself below all, although she stood far above all. She complied with ordinances from which she was exempt. In this she imitated her Divine Son, who, in submitting to the law of circumcision, to which He was not subject, humbled Himself, and was counted with sinners in order to teach us all the virtue of humility and obedience. Oh! that we all, like His holy Mother, would imitate this example!

Another remarkable incident is related in to-day's Gospel. In Jerusalem lived an old and holy man named Simeon, who had for many years longed for the coming of the Messiah. It was promised to him by God that he should see Him before his departure from this life. This venerable and pious man, inspired by the Holy Ghost, repaired to the Temple just at the time Mary was there with her Divine Son. Seeing the child in Mary's arms, he beheld in Him, by divine inspiration, the long-promised Messiah. The joy with which at that moment his heart was filled, no words can express. He took the Divine Child reverently into his arms, embraced it tenderly, and cried with a loud ringing voice: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to enlighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel." After this, he turned to the Virgin Mother, blessed her and said: "Behold this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel: and for a sign, which shall be spoken against. And a sword shall pierce through thy own soul, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." By these words the holy Simeon, not only foretold what would happen to the Virgin Mother, but also to her Divine Child. While Simeon thus spoke to the Blessed Virgin, Anna, a widow, eighty-four years of age, entered the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel, and had lived with her deceased husband only seven years. After his death she remained most of the time in the Temple praying; and she was renowned, not only on account of the holy life she led, but also because of her gift of prophecy. No sooner did she behold the holy Child, than her

heart, like Simeon's overflowed with joy, because by divine revelation, she recognized in Him the Saviour of the world. She gave thanks and praises to the Most High, and spoke to those present of all that the Holy Spirit had foretold her of this Child. Mary and Joseph marvelled at all they heard, pondered silently over it, and after having given thanks to God, and performed all things according to law, they returned to Nazareth. This is the mystery which to-day's feast offers to our contemplation. It is believed that from the example of the Blessed Virgin, who this day carried the Divine Child into the Temple to offer it to God, the praiseworthy custom dates, that Christian mothers, after childbirth, carry their children to the church, offer them as a holocaust of thanks to God and receive the blessings of the Priests. Oh! that mothers would not forget this offering, but would educate their children for God and not for the service of Satan, the world and the flesh!

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Many and ennobling are the examples of virtue that the beautiful feast of to-day offers to your contemplation. Take some of them to heart.

I. Mary, the Divine Mother, submits to a law which she is not obliged to obey. You, therefore, must submit to the Commandments of God and the Church, which you are bound to obey, under the penalty of damnation.

II. Mary, though most pure, goes into the temple to be purified according to the law, although she needs no such purification. Your conscience is impure, by reason of many sins. You really stand in need of purification. Take care that you may be cleansed as soon as possible: because you know that nothing impure can enter heaven, but you do not know how soon the days may end which God has given you for your purification.

III. Mary, the blessed among women, does not exalt herself above others, although God had raised her high above all. She mingles with other, in reality, unclean women,

and will not even be esteemed for what she is. Do you never raise yourself above others. Despise not those who are less in the eyes of the world than yourself. Desire not to appear more than you are.

IV. Mary consecrated to God Almighty what she loved best, her own, her Divine Child. You must sacrifice to the service of this same God, your heart, your body, your soul, your life, and all you possess. The holy Mass gives you an opportunity to offer to the Almighty as the holy Mother offered to-day. Let not this opportunity be neglected.

V. Mary offers her Child to the venerable and pious Simeon. He receives Him with great joy and veneration, desiring to die after he has seen Him. "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace," says he. In the holy Communion the same One is offered to you, whom this day Simeon received into his arms. Invoke the Blessed Virgin, that she may obtain for you the grace to receive Him worthily before you depart this life. That you

may be more certain to obtain this grace, be careful that you always prepare yourself properly to receive the bread of Life, and that you never dare to go to His table unworthily. This preparation consists in cleansing your soul from all sin and adorning it with all virtues. Christ will bestow peculiar grace upon you if you thus receive the holy Communion. He has said: "Whosoever eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life" (St. John, 6, ch. 54 v.). The promise of eternal life contains the promise of all things that are needful or beneficial to obtain it.

I. If you cleanse your soul by confession from all sin, but receive not the holy Communion with fervor and affection, you deprive yourself of many graces which you might otherwise enjoy. Should you, however, without disburdening your conscience, dare to partake of the body and blood of Christ you must not only expect no grace, but, on the contrary, eternal damnation. Such a Communion would be an unworthy Communion, and therefore a mortal sin. By so doing, the offence you offer to Christ your Lord is inconceivably great. Tell me, if Simeon had thrown the Divine Child into a pit, reeking with noisome odors, would he not have injured Him most terribly? If any one dared to throw a consecrated Host into a pit, or upon a dunghill, or even gave it to a dog, would he not commit a sin deserving more punishment than hell? Surely. But now, pay attention to the words of St. Bonaventure: "You wretched, miserable sinner, you are more detestable, more abominable than a dog." You are more horribly filthy than the most horrible pit, or the most repulsive stable or dunghill, if you are in one mortal sin. Judge, yourself, if the insult you offer to

Christ your Lord when you take the Communion unworthily, and if the heinousness of the unspeakably great sin you thus commit do not deserve more than hell? If you have ever thus offended God, repent of it with all the strength of your mind as long as you live. As often as you see the Host in the Church, supplicate your deeply offended God to have compassion on you and forgive you your sins. In future, however, take care not to repeat the offence. And if you conceal any thing in the Confessional, restrain yourself from the crime of receiving the holy Communion while in this unhallowed state. You already offend Christ by a sacrilegious confession; will you still further provoke his wrath by a sacrilegious Communion? Will you force him to condemn you? Hear the words of St. Paul, and tremble while you hear them: "He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself" (I. Cor. 11th chapter). St. Chrysostom explains this in this manner: "Those who receive the body and blood of Christ unworthily, commit a sin as great as those who crucified and killed our Lord, therefore they must expect as great a punishment. They eat judgment to themselves, or, in other words, they condemn themselves by unworthily partaking of the blessed Sacrament."

II. I doubt not that from your childhood you have endeavored to honor the Virgin Mother, and to manifest towards her fervent devotion. To-day without doubt you will renew it. You do well in this; but, tell me, has the devotion that you have cherished towards the Divine Mother been such as St. Thomas declares is a sign which promises eternal happiness? If your devotion consists only in daily reciting a few prayers in Mary's

honor—in keeping certain fasts—in sometimes making a pilgrimage—in being a member of various sodalities—but if yet, in spite of all this, you lead an indifferent, perhaps an ungodly life, and make no endeavor to reform, because you fancy you do enough in Mary's honor, and, therefore, cannot go to perdition; Oh! learn, in such case, that your devotion is not true devotion, nor such as can give you any assurance or even hope of eternal happiness. For true devotion to the Blessed Virgin, it is most essential earnestly and strenuously to avoid what is displeasing, and to do what is agreeable to her. To pray, to fast, to make pilgrimages, to belong to sodalities, etc., is good, praiseworthy, and acceptable to God, and is what a true child of Mary ought to practice; but it is far from constituting all the devotion which we owe to her. Combined with these duties ought to be the fervent desire to shun what is displeasing to her, and to do all that is agreeable in her sight. Most displeasing to Mary is sin, because it is an offence to Him whom Mary loves above everything. Very agreeable to her is the avoid-

ance of sin and the imitation of her virtues. Therefore, if you wish to cherish a true devotion towards the Divine Mother, endeavor earnestly to avoid sin and to follow her example in the path of virtue. Resolve, for instance, early in the morning, particularly on Saturdays, on the feasts, and during the month of Mary, that you will practice this or that virtue. Should you be tempted to do wrong, think, or say, firmly: "No! For the love of Mary, I will not commit this sin." In this manner will you evince that devotion towards the Virgin Mother, which St. Thomas, among other things, teaches, is a comforting sign of eternal bliss. Among other arguments, he makes use of the words, which the holy infallible Church has applied to the Blessed Virgin: "In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue" (Eccl. xxiv). "I love them that love me: and they that in the morning early watch for me, shall find me. He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord" (Proverbs, viii.).

THIRD DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. BLAISE, BISHOP AND MARTYR.

This holy Bishop and martyr, Blaise, was born at Sebaste, in Armenia, and received from his noble and rich parents all the advantages of a virtuous and Christian education. He walked from the most tender age in the ways of the righteous, loved God and was chaste and pure. He shunned the society of those who, by their expressions or manners, he perceived were frivolous or licentious. He was always an enemy to impure language, and reproved those who dared to make use of it in his presence. Towards the poor he was kind and full of pity. His thoughts and

wishes were never absorbed by worldly advantages: he only sought heavenly treasures. These, and other virtues, caused him to be so much loved by God and by men, that on the death of the Bishop, he was unanimously elected his successor. During several years he filled his sacred office with a truly apostolical fervor, and left nothing undone that could possibly be required of a perfect and holy Bishop. Meanwhile a terrible persecution of the Christians arose. Agricolaus, Governor of Armenia, by command of the Emperor, came to Sebaste, with an order to annihilate the whole of Christendom. The holy Bishop exhorted those in his charge to remain constant, and taught them how and why they should rather suffer the most cruel torments, or even death itself, than forsake their Faith. It was his intention never to leave his flock; but he was not only implored by the Priests, but even directed by God Himself, to seek, for some time, shelter from the storm. He, therefore, selected some of the Priests to represent him and aid the faithful by counsel and consolation, after which he concealed himself in a cavern upon Mount Argeus, where he prayed without ceasing for his flock. And in truth the prayer of the holy Bishop was heard and answered. The Christians of Sebaste remained steadfast under the most cruel persecution, and there was no torture nor death so terrible that they would not have joyfully suffered for their Faith.

But while God thus visibly supported the flock of the Saint with His Divine grace, neither did He forget to provide the faithful Shepherd with food. Senseless animals came every day to him, supplied him with all he needed, and left him not until he had blessed them. From the neighborhood came all the infirm, and the sick were brought to him that he might heal them. The Saint, after a short prayer, bestowed health upon them by the sign of the cross, and dismissed them comforted and happy. For some time all this remained unknown to the persecutors of the Christians, but one day as the servants of Agricolaus were hunting in the woods near Mount Argeus, they perceived the wild beasts running towards the cave where the Bishop was concealed. They followed them and discovered the Saint praying. They informed Agricolaus of it, and were forthwith ordered to seize him. Meanwhile God revealed to His faithful servant the martyrdom wherewith he was to be crowned. Therefore, as soon as he saw the soldiers approach, he gave himself up and descended the mountain with them. On the way several sick persons were brought to him whom he immediately, in presence of the heathen soldiers, cured of their diseases. As soon as the holy Bishop arrived in the city, he was thrown into a frightful dungeon. There he again performed some miraculous cures upon people

who were brought to him through the kindness of the jailer. Amongst these was a boy, the only son of a widow, who had a fishbone in such a position in his throat that it was impossible to extricate it. The throat was greatly swollen, and he was suffering excruciating pain. The Saint raised his eyes towards heaven and made the sign of the cross upon the suffering throat. Without experiencing any further pain, the boy was immediately relieved of the bone, the swelling disappeared, and he went joyfully away. It is in consequence of this miracle, that to this day, St. Blaise is invoked in such accidents, and especially in cases of sore throat. Agricolaus, informed of these miracles, caused the Saint to be brought before him, and endeavored to persuade him, by flattery and threats, to worship the heathen gods. But the Saint, nothing daunted, laid before him the deceit and falsity of the Pagan faith. Agricolaus forthwith commanded that he should be scourged most cruelly. For three hours he endured this treatment, when it was discontinued for a short time, that he might be able to bear the dreadful sufferings so much longer, as they were to be constantly increased. But God preserved, by miraculous power, the life of his servant and gave him strength to say to the tyrant: "Do you think by this means to make me faithless to my God? All your endeavors are in vain. He comforts me and gives me strength. You can never have any power over me." The tyrant, enraged at these words, remanded him to the prison. Finding that he wavered not in his fidelity to his God, they, a few days later, stretched him on the rack and tore his whole body with iron combs. But the Saint, while undergoing this torture, displayed the same invincible courage that had previously sustained him, and after it he was again cast into the dungeon. There some pious women followed him and with fine linen stopped the blood which flowed from his wounds; but they were soon seized, and, after having endured indescribable tortures, were beheaded.

Not long after this the Saint was sentenced to be drowned in a pond. Cheerfully did he go thither, and having crossed himself, he also made the sign of the cross over the water, after which he was thrown violently into it. But rising instantly, he walked upon the water as though upon dry land, and preached to all who were assembled, the truth of the Christian Faith. "If there be one among you," cried he, finally, "who believes that his gods have as great power as the God of the Christians, let him now come to me!" A few sacrilegious men dared to attempt to do so, but they sank immediately. St. Blaise, however, returned once more to the land and was beheaded, thus ending his glorious life in the year of our Lord 316.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Blaise performed many incontestibly miraculous cures with the sign of the holy cross. Before he was precipitated into the pond, he made the sign of the cross upon himself and over the water, and God worked the great miracle that I have just related. The use of the sign of the cross originated with the first Christians, and is in itself an acknowledgment of the true Faith, and at the same time, a sign of trust in the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. Those who are not Catholics despise and reject it without reason. But there are also those who call themselves Catholics without manifesting it in deeds. Not only are they ashamed to make the sign of the cross in the presence of such as belong not to their Faith, but they even omit it when, among Catholics. Neither before nor after meals, neither in the morning nor at night, neither at church nor at home, do they mark themselves with the sign of the cross. They look upon this ancient custom as something only suitable for children, or low-bred people. I am afraid such people will experience the truth of what Christ said in the Gospel, viz. : that He will be ashamed of them, because they were ashamed of Him. Be not you thus unworthy to be called Catholic. Do not you thus despise and neglect using the sign of the cross, but esteem it highly and practice it after the ancient custom, morning and night, when you rise and when you lie down, before and after your prayers and also in every danger that may threaten the welfare of your body or soul. But when you cross yourself, always let your heart be

filled with confidence in Him, who, out of his great love for you, suffered an ignominious death upon the cross. "In making the sign of the cross," writes St. Chrysostom, "arm your brow with great confidence. It must be made not only with the finger upon the body, but with faith deep in the inmost recesses of the heart. If you sign yourself in such a manner, no evil spirit will dare to combat you ; they fear the sign that gave them their death-stroke."

II. St. Blaise feared to offend God : he loved and guarded his innocence with great care, he avoided the society of those who were licentious in speech or manner, and punished such as dared to use impure language. The following are maxims in which you must imitate the Saint, if you would gain eternal salvation. Fear God, because He is the judge who has power to condemn you for all eternity. Love and guard your innocence, because it is the jewel with which you can purchase entrance into heaven. Shun the companionship of those whose words cause the innocent to blush. Never indulge in such expressions yourself or your innocence will depart and your salvation be endangered. If you would not be eternally damned, ever cherish and manifest the deepest abhorrence of unchaste expressions, as well as for those who make use of them. You flee with loathing from a man who has the plague, or any other contagious disease, because you fear to be infected. Know, then, that those whose language is impure, are surely afflicted with the terrible plague of want of chastity. That they are unclean in their

hearts, we perceive in their words. The stench that a grave exhales is a sign that a corrupt, putrifying body lies therein, and the unchaste words are not less a sign of the internal putrefaction of a corrupt soul. "Their mouth is an open sepulchre," says the Psalmist (Ps. 5). St. Thomas remarks, this was appropriately said of those who made use of unchaste language. "Their mouth exhales a stench worse than that of a half putrified carcass," writes St. Chrysostom. You must further learn that the disease of impure words is contagious. The holy Apostle Paul teaches this in the following words: "Be not seduced:

evil communication corrupts good manners" (1 Cor. 15th ch.). A person living a pious life will soon lose his piety and become vicious, if he listen to unchaste language, or associate with those who in this respect place no guard on their words. The dreadful pestilence of impurity will surely contaminate him.

What must, therefore, be done? You must avoid those who can infect you with eternal destruction. Once more, then, let me exhort you: avoid the unchaste; shun all who speak of impure things, otherwise the dreadful pestilence will seize you.

FOURTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. ANDREW CORSINI, BISHOP OF FIESOLE.

The holy Bishop Andrew was born in Florence, on the festival of the Apostle Andrew, from whom he received the name at his baptism. His parents, of the illustrious house of Corsini, had lived many years without having an heir, but received one at length in Andrew, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, whom they had invoked, with a vow that if they should receive a son, they would consecrate him to the service of God and the Holy Mother. The day before his birth his mother dreamed that she was brought to bed of a wolf, which, running into the Church of the Carmelites, was changed into a lamb. The signification of this dream became clear some years later. While growing up, Andrew sought only that licence which is so hurtful to the young, and he heeded neither the admonitions nor the threats of his parents, who were deeply grieved on account of his conduct. One day, when he had been very disrespectful to his mother, she said to him, sadly: "In truth you are like a wolf, and the first part of my dream is fulfilled in you. Will the second part ever be fulfilled, and will you change from a wolf into a lamb?" Andrew started, and asked his mother to explain the meaning of her words. She did so, and added that, as she had consecrated him to God and the

Blessed Virgin, he should repent and accomplish her vow. Andrew, deeply moved, having begged his mother's pardon upon his knees, went immediately into the nearest Church of the Carmelites. Prostrating himself before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, he bewailed his past life with many tears, and, consecrating himself a servant of God and Mary, implored their aid. He then proceeded to the Monastery, and earnestly requested to be admitted into the holy order. His wish was acceded to, and from that moment his whole life was changed. Although Satan for some time continued to disturb him and endeavored to fill his mind with disgust and weariness for a religious life; Andrew fought valiantly with him, and conquered.

After his novitiate, he was sent to Paris to study, and thence he returned to Florence as Doctor of Divinity. When the day approached on which he was to say his first Mass, he perceived that his friends wished to spend large sums of money upon splendid music and costly decorations. To prevent the disturbance which this display would have caused to his devotions, he withdrew to a monastery seven miles from Florence, where he offered in unbroken solitude, his adoration to the Almighty. The Queen of Heaven, to whom he ascribed his conversion, as well as all the other graces he had received from God, appeared to him during the first holy Mass, and addressed him in the words of the prophet: "Thou art my servant; thee have I elected, and in thee will I be praised." From this period the holy man began to prophecy and to work miracles. At Avignon, he restored sight to a blind man who was sitting at the church door. At Florence he cured a friar of the dropsy.

One day, baptizing a child of noble parentage, he exclaimed: 'This child is born to his own and his country's destruction.' The proof of this prophecy became apparent when that child, in after years, conspired against his country and ended his life miserably by the hands of the common executioner.

Some years later, St. Andrew became Prior of the Monastery at Florence, and when the Bishop of Fiesole died, he was chosen to fill his place. No sooner, however, was he informed of this event than he secretly fled and concealed himself in a hermitage three miles out of town. After vainly searching for him a long time, they proceeded to a new election. Almighty God, however, who would that Andrew should become Bishop, caused it to come to pass that a little boy, aged three years, cried out: "God has chosen Andrew. He is in the Hermitage, and is praying." Messengers were immediately sent thither, who found the Saint just as the child had said. Meanwhile Andrew had been admonished by God not to refuse the vacant See. He

therefore went willirgly with the messengers to Fiesole. Having been consecrated Bishop, he entered upon his sacred duties in the fifty-eighth year of his age, and fulfilled his functions with unabating zeal until he had attained his seventy-first year. He altered nothing in his manner of living, except that he became still more zealous in the practice of every virtue, well knowing that greater perfection is demanded of a Bishop than of a priest of a lower order. No idle entertainment, no comforts did he allow himself. Besides the rough hair shirt, which he had worn for many years, he had around him a pointed iron girdle; he said daily, after his usual prayers, the Seven Penitential Psalms, and ended his prayers by a severe flagellation.

He rested at night upon dried vine-branches, but only a few hours, as he employed the period of darkness mostly in prayer and holy meditation. He fasted almost daily, and allowed no delicious or choice food upon his table, except when he was obliged to entertain guests, on which occasions, however, he did not partake of any delicacies. During the day, when not occupied with his sacred duties, he employed the time in teaching, visiting and consoling those committed to his charge, whose spiritual and temporal welfare was very dear to him. Following the example of Pope Gregory, he had a list of the names of all the poor, that he might assist all and forget none in distributing alms. Actuated by the desire to imitate our dear Saviour, he, every Thursday, washed the feet of the poor. So holy a life caused the Bishop to be loved like a father, as well as revered as a Saint by those under his care. His exhortations and admonitions had such great power, that but little exertion on his part was needed to convert the most hardened sinner, and he was able to reconcile to love and harmony those who were most bitterly at variance. Many examples of this may be cited, of which the following is one. At Bologna there existed great discord between the nobles and the people, which had already caused much public harm as well as private unhappiness. Many persons, both priests and laymen, had endeavored to heal the dissension, but neither persuasions nor admonitions had been found of any avail. The Pope, fearing, not without reason, that the daily increasing contention would tend to precipitate many inhabitants of the town into temporal and eternal destruction, commanded St. Andrew to go to Bologna and leave nothing undone to unite the so long-divided parties. The holy man obeyed, and God so signally blessed his efforts that, in a short time, to the great joy of the Pope and of the people of Bologna, he succeeded in allaying all animosities. Having restored order and unity, he was looked upon by all as an angel of peace.

This great work being happily concluded, he gave thanks to God and again returned to his See. On the following Christmas, as he was saying Mass with great devotion, the Blessed Virgin appeared and announced to him that he should die on the sixth day of January. No invalid could be happier when assured that he would recover his health, than was the Saint when informed that the hour of his death was so near. After Mass, he gratefully acknowledged the favor the Holy Mother had bestowed upon him by bringing him such joyful news. Having, since his conversion, always loved the Blessed Virgin with filial devotion, and invoked her aid on all occasions, he now humbly supplicated her to be with him in his last hour. The day following he was seized with a severe fever, which obliged him to keep his bed, and which ended, on the sixth of January, with the happy death of the Saint. During his illness he not only refused all refreshment given to the sick, but would not take anything to soothe his pain, in order that he might suffer for the sake of Christ. He prepared himself for death by devoutly receiving the Holy Sacrament, and by the exercise of the most exalted virtues. The whole town grieved when it became known that the Saint was sick: his countenance alone expressed joy, showing that death is a comforter, if it has been preceded by a holy life. This joy continued to his latest breath, which took place, as previously said, on the 6th of January, 1373. His holy body exhaled a delicious fragrance, and his resting-place was illuminated with heavenly light. To several of his friends the Saint appeared after his death, arrayed in glory. The town of Florence has often experienced his protection, and therefore its inhabitants honor him as their special patron Saint, and invoke his intercession on all occasions.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Andrew employed the greater part of the night in prayer; and the day, besides other good works, in teaching, comforting, and admonishing those committed to his care. Whoever thus passes the precious time, can easily give an account of the hours bestowed on him by God. But what account can those give who pass a great part, if not the whole night, in vain, or perhaps sinful pleasures, and the day in idleness, in long, unnecessary

visits, in immoderately adorning their persons, in empty, unchaste conversation, or in some similar miserable manner, without giving a thought to the performance of any good action, or to fulfilling one single duty of their station. Saints, who bestowed great pains upon rightly employing their time, have still feared the moment when they should be called upon to render an account of it to their Creator. "O God, my Lord!" cried St. Lauren-

tius Justinianus, "how great a part of my life is past from which I have not derived any profit! How shall I present myself before Thee? How can I raise my eyes to Thee on the great and awful day when Thou wilt demand an account of every hour of my life?" Thus spoke the Saint. Why, then, do so many mere children of the world, who employ their time so differently, not fear? Why are they so careless of the loss of so many precious hours and days? Ah! surely they never reflect how transient, how valuable, how priceless the fleeting moments are, and how infinite the loss is when they are spent in idleness! "How blind you are!" writes St. Chrysostom. "When you lose money, you consider it a great loss; but in carelessly wasting so many hours and days, you do not seem to think it any loss at all." Is not a single hour more costly than the gold and silver of the entire earth? Consider this, dear reader, and bestow greater pains in making better use of the precious time which God, in preference to thousands of others, has conferred upon you. You cannot ponder too deeply nor too often upon this truth: "The time that the grace of God has given me is short, is infinitely precious, is irrevocable; it returns never more. Great God! to lose it once is to lose it for all Eternity!"

I. St. Andrew refused to receive anything during his sickness to revive him or to soothe his pain. God does not demand so much of you, but he asks—nay, He commands—that you shall not make use of inadmissible, superstitious, sinful means to regain health. You may make use of admissible remedies, spiritual as well as corporeal. Should such, however, prove unavailing, submit to the will of God and bear your suffering patiently, because it

is not God's will that every disease shall be cured by remedies. He sometimes ordains that people shall suffer long, because He knows that it is needful for their salvation. It is certainly true that the souls of some persons suffer while the body is in a state of health, and to such sickness is wholesome. "Bodily disease is health for the soul," says St. Gregory. "Many, while sick, think not of evil; but no sooner are they restored to health than they become the slaves of vice," says St. Augustine. "Many who are well in health and remain so become not holy, neither can they be saved," says St. Salvianus. As you, therefore, are ignorant whether health or sickness is beneficial to you, calm your mind, after having made use of all admissible remedies, and, placing your trust in the holy will of the Lord, supplicate Him humbly to grant that you may suffer with Christian patience. God-fearing persons, who take my words to heart, when sick, will lay every circumstance before the throne of Grace, and then commit themselves peacefully to the will of the Almighty. They will say, with St. Magdalen and Martha, "O Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick" (St. John, 11th chapter). Or, with the leper, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean" (St. Matthew, 8th chapter). Lastly, consider the admonition of the Holy Ghost: "My son, regret not the correction of the Lord, and do not faint when thou art chastised by Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and as a Father in the Son He pleaseth Himself" (Prov. 3rd chapter).

We gain further admonition from the dream of St. Andrew's mother. Nothing is more common than to dream during the time of sleep. Some dreams come from a

good angel, or from God Himself. He announces by them future events, as happened to St. Joseph and the mother of St. Andrew; or He endeavors by them to deter man from evil and admonisheth him to repentance, or converts him, through their instrumentality, to a more pious life, as we see in the lives of many Saints. These dreams we should not despise, but honor and look upon them as rules by which to regulate our conduct, because they are admonitions from God. Other dreams come from the Evil One, who seeks through them to disturb or frighten man, to restrain him from doing good, or incite him to do evil. Among these particularly are impure dreams. Take heed that, during the day, you give no occasion to such dreams, but, if you have done so, repent of your error before you retire for the night. Implore God, in your evening prayer, that He may protect you during the night from everything that is displeasing in His sight. When you awake in the morning, do not muse much over your dreams; but should they occur to your mind in spite of your endeavors, turn your thoughts from them and seek refuge in prayer. Know that we commit a great sin when, awake and conscious, we are diverted by the recollection of a sinful dream, although, by the dream itself, we have not committed any sin, being at that time deprived of consciousness. There are also dreams which originate in a person's constitution, or from his busi-

ness or circumstances. To put faith in such dreams, or in those which proceed from the Arch-fiend, to muse over them, or even, without any reason, to interpret them in all possible ways, or to explain the future through them, whether we are to be happy or unhappy, whether our life is to be long or short, whether we shall follow this or that path in life, etc., is not only senseless, but sinful. It is, further, an error to conform our actions to dreams, or to relate them to others, and seek an explanation. Not less is it a sin to consult dream-books, or books on astrology, or give them to others to read in order to interpret dreams, and learn what they signify. In so doing we may do a great sin, by deceiving or frightening ourselves or others most fearfully and without cause. Lastly, it is not less an error, on awaking or rising, to ponder anxiously over the dreams of the night. It is a deceit, a temptation emanating from Satan, to prevent our addressing the first daily thought to God, but, instead of this, to fall into danger of sin. Listen not to the Evil One, but, on awaking, address yourself immediately to God in prayer to protect you, and then leave the events of the day in His hands. In conclusion, refuse not the exhortation of the Holy Ghost: "Set not thy heart upon them"—namely, upon dreams—"for dreams have deceived many, and they have failed that put their trust in them" (Eccl. 34th chapter).

FIFTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. AGATHA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR, AND THE TWENTY-SIX MARTYRS OF JAPAN.

One of the most celebrated Christian heroines who, on account of their faith, have suffered with most invincible fortitude, is the saintly virgin Agatha. She was born at Palermo, or, according to others, at Catania, in Sicily. She was of illustrious parentage, and was piously educated in the Christian faith. When Quintianus, Governor under the Emperor Decius, was commanded to uproot Christianity in Sicily, he repaired to Catania. Soon after his arrival he was informed that a noble lady, of the name of Agatha, resided there, who, for wealth and beauty, had no superior, and who was also the most fervent of all the Christians. The Governor caused her to be brought before him, and, on first seeing her, he fell so deeply in love with her that he hesitated not to try to induce her to listen to his shameful designs. Agatha, who united with beauty the most angelic chastity, was terrified at his wickedness, and would have preferred death rather than allow the least liberty with her person. Quintianus, who would not use force, deprived her of her liberty, under the pretext that she was a Christian, and gave her into the charge of Aphrodisia, an infamous old prostitute, who had led her own daughters into the path of shame and wickedness, and lived by means of their vices. He supposed that Agatha, living with a person so vile, would, by her persuasions, lose her love of chastity, and, at the same time, abjure her faith. But he soon found that he was mistaken. The chaste virgin, armed by the thought of God's presence, by prayers and by fasting, bore a mighty shield against all flatteries, persuasions, and promises. For thirty days she had to remain upon this dangerous field of battle; but God gave her strength, and she conquered. Aphrodisia herself had at last to confess this to Quintianus, and would have nothing further to do with the maiden.

The Governor, much displeased, ordered her into his presence, and asked her from whom she was descended; and when she had answered his questions, he said: "Are you not ashamed to live the despicable and servile life of a Christian, coming from so illustrious a family?" Agatha unhesitatingly replied: "The humility and servility of a Christian is more excellent than the riches, pride, and presumption of kings." These words provoked Quintianus to such a degree that he ordered her daring obstin-

acy to be punished by blows in the face, which were forthwith given with such violence that the blood streamed from her mouth and nostrils. After this, she was cast into prison, with the threat that if she did not abjure the Christian faith she should be proceeded against with the utmost rigor. This menace was, on the following day, put into execution. Quintianus ordered her to be stretched on the rack, her whole body tortured with red hot irons, and at last her breast to be torn off with hot tongs. All was done as the tyrant commanded. At the last torture the saintly virgin said to him: "Cruel tyrant, who sucked the breast of your mother, are you not ashamed to tear it so pitilessly from the body of a virgin?" But Quintianus possessed neither shame nor pity. After this horrible torture, he remanded her to prison, giving orders that she should receive no food, neither should anything be done to alleviate her sufferings. On the following night there appeared to her a venerable man, who said that he was an apostle sent by Christ to heal her wounds. He praised her fortitude, and encouraged her to show equal strength in the trials she had yet to endure. During his exhortation, St. Agatha perceived that her torn breast was restored, and that all her wounds were miraculously healed. She felt, at the same time, in her inmost heart, so great a consolation, that she began to praise and give thanks to God with a loud voice, offering herself to Him for further torments. After four days she was again taken before the Governor, and as he was astounded to see her thus entirely restored, she said to him: "Behold and acknowledge the omnipotence of the God whom I worship! He has healed my wounds; He has restored my breast! How, then, can you ask me to forsake Him? No! the most cruel torture, the most horrible death has no power to separate me from Him!" Quintianus, more enraged than before, ordered that the ground should be strewn with live coals and sharp potsherds, and that Agatha should be rolled naked over them, that her whole body might be torn and burned. The suffering of this unheard-of and dreadful torture, Agatha endured, as she had all the others, with unmoved fortitude. The people who were present manifested great compassion towards the virgin, and God delayed not to punish so wicked a crime. He sent an earthquake, so terrible, that the whole town was shaken. Silvinius and Falconius, the two most intimate friends of the Governor, were crushed under the falling ruins, and all the inhabitants were plunged into the wildest fear. They crowded together, saying that this was visibly a judgment of God, which the cruelty of Quintianus had brought down upon them. The Governor, fearing a general insurrection, ordered that Agatha should once more be taken back to prison. Arriving there, she

sank upon her knees, raised her hands and eyes towards heaven, and thus prayed: "O Lord, Thou who hast been my protection since my childhood, who hast taken from me the love of the world and given me grace to endure the sufferings of my tormentors, hear the supplication of Thy faithful handmaid and accept my soul." God heard her prayers, and received the triumphant spirit of his handmaid in the year 252. The inhabitants of Catania honor this holy martyr as patroness, on account of the visible protection which she has rendered them at times when Mount Ætna, throwing up fierce flames, threatened destruction, not only to the town, but to all the surrounding villages. More than once in the present century has it happened that a torrent of lava, issuing from this mountain during a great eruption, and destroying everything in its course, has come nearer and nearer to the town. But on holding towards it a veil with which the holy body of Agatha was covered, and which was carried in solemn procession, the fiery stream not only approached no nearer, but drew back before the eyes of the people. Thus is it that His faithful handmaid is honored by God, even long after her departure from this life.



To-day, also, the Holy Church honors twenty-six martyrs, the first, who, in Japan, sealed the truth of the Christian religion with their blood, in the year of our Lord 1597. Seventy-four years before that period, St. Francis Xavier had commenced to preach the Gospel there. Several Priests of the Society of Jesus continued after him the apostolic work, with so much success, that they counted two hundred thousand Christians in the above-mentioned year; and among them were many kings, princes, and nobles. Taicosama, the emperor, appeared to favor the Christians much, during the first five years of his reign; but soon after that period he commanded that all who taught the Gospel, of whom more than one hundred were Jesuits, should leave his dominions within six months. The latter thought it advisable to yield, apparently, to the wrath of the Emperor, as they feared that, were they to continue to preach openly, they would, in all probability, provoke him to such a degree that he might completely destroy Christianity in Japan. They therefore sent some of their Society to Micaö, a town situated near the borders of the empire. The others, however, remained concealed, so as to be ready to assist the Christians, keep them steadfast in the true faith, and await better times. Thus passed two years, during which period the Jesuits, protected by several princes who had received the Christian faith,

added more than fifty thousand souls to the Church. The Emperor was well aware of this fact, but, without reproving the Priests, he passed it over in silence, and by this means awoke in the Christians the hope of regaining their former religious liberty. In 1593, the Governor of the Philippine Isles sent a considerable embassy, with many costly presents, to the Emperor, and among these ambassadors were several very zealous Priests of the Order of St. Francis. After having concluded their mission, the Franciscans commenced to preach openly in Meaco and several other places, thinking that it would be unbecoming in Priests not to teach the Gospel, but conceal themselves for fear of the Emperor. The enemies of the Christian faith failed not to inform Taicosama of this fact, who was much enraged, and gave orders that six Franciscans should be immediately crucified after the Japanese manner, and that the others should be sent back to Europe. The Governor of Ozaca, who received this imperial order, not only seized six of the Franciscans, but intended to add to the number all the Jesuits who resided there, of whom, however, only three were found, viz.: Paul Maki, John Goto, and James Chisai. The names of the Franciscans were: P. Peter Baptist, P. Martin de Ascensione, Philip de Jesu, Gonsalvus Garzia, Francis Olanus, and Francis of St. Michael. All these, with fifteen Japanese, who were either acquainted with the above-named Priests or were inmates of their houses, were seized and sent to Meaco to be incarcerated in the dungeon appropriated to criminals. Among the Japanese were three boys, who used to serve the Priests at Mass—Louis, Anthony, and Thomas, of whom the oldest was only fifteen, the second thirteen, and the third ten or eleven years of age. The following day these twenty-four confessors of Christ were brought to the market-place, with their arms bound behind them; and after having had a portion of the left ear cut off, to degrade them, they were placed upon a wagon and conducted through the streets of the town to be publicly scoffed at. Not only did these valiant champions of the true Faith manifest no fear, but, on the contrary, they were cheerful and happy, praising God with loud voices, and thanking Him that He had esteemed them worthy to suffer for their Saviour. At the same time P. Baptist preached the Christian religion to the people who crowded around them, and exhorted all to embrace the same. From Meaco the prisoners were brought to Nangasaki, passing through several villages and towns on their way. The journey lasted over three weeks, and as just then extremely cold weather set in, the prisoners had much to suffer. Upon the road two more victims joined them: they were two Christians, who, having been sent by the

Priests of the two Orders to provide the prisoners with food and other necessities, were seized by the soldiers who guarded the prisoners, thrown upon the wagon, and conducted with the rest to Nangasaki, at which place the crucifixion was to take place, upon a hill near the town. It was an extraordinary sight to witness the joy with which the martyrs hastened to embrace the crosses destined for them, when they had arrived at the place of execution. Louis, the youngest boy, filled all present with astonishment as he cried, with a loud voice: "Where is my cross?" They showed it to him, and he, after having clasped it joyfully in his arms, said a short prayer and stretched himself upon it, longing to die for the sake, of Christ. Without loss of time he and the others were fastened to their crosses by cords, according to the Japanese manner, and were then raised into the air. Indescribable was the joy which beamed from their faces as they looked at each other from their crosses. Encouraging one another, they all praised God by singing Psalms and reciting aloud many pious prayers. Paul Miki, whose zealous preaching had already converted many, made use of his cross as a pulpit, exhorting the people most earnestly to embrace Christianity, and strenuously admonishing those who had already received the Faith, to remain constant, as on so doing rested all their hope of salvation. He declared, at the same time, that God had singularly blessed him, as he, at the same age as Christ when he died, suffered, in like manner, death upon the cross. To a friend who pitied him he said: "To die for keeping the Commandments of God is no cause for pity, but for rejoicing." The same sentiments animated the hearts of the others. Meanwhile the executioners lifted their lances and pierced the martyrs from the right side to the left. They all soon expired, most of them uttering the words: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Others died invoking the holy names of Jesus and Mary. When the executioners, after the first thrust of their lances, perceived that life was not entirely extinct, they pierced the bodies a second time, and repeated this until they believed that all life had fled. The heathens present at the execution were greatly astonished that not one of the martyrs exhibited the least token of sadness, but that all appeared to rejoice greatly. "What men are these," said they, "who delight in suffering and misfortune as others do in pleasure and happiness!" Many of them were converted. Upon the place where these martyrs so gloriously ended their last battle, lights and burning columns were seen during many a night afterwards. God also honored these holy martyrs with many other miracles, by which they soon became known and greatly celebrated, among heathens as well as among Christians.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. During thirty days St. Agatha suffers from a wicked person's assaults against her virtue, but remains firm. Why are you so easily misled to wicked deeds? Why do you not fight as bravely as this saintly virgin fought? Why do not you make use of the same weapons that she used, viz., prayers, fasting and the thought of the omnipresence of God? Surely the thought alone—God sees me—He is present—will strengthen you for the combat and make you invincible against temptation. "Not one of those who really believe that God is always and everywhere present, that He sees, hears, and knows all things, will ever commit a sin, or even think of committing one," says St. Blaise. As soon, however, as man forgets the presence of the Almighty, there is no vice so gross that he will not commit without shame. Those two old wicked elders said: "Nobody sees us." They thought not of God and therefore endeavored to seduce the chaste Susanna. But she, knowing the Almighty's presence, was determined rather to die than to sin before His eyes. "But it is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord" (Daniel, chap. xiii.).

II. All the holy Japanese

martyrs showed how happy they thought themselves to suffer and die for the true Faith. It is surely a priceless blessing to die a martyr, because for such the gates of heaven are undoubtedly at once opened. If you would partake of this blessedness, you must endeavor with all your might to walk in the path of the martyrs. "But how can we follow the martyrs?" asks St. Chrysostom, and then answers as follows: "The Church is not now persecuted by her enemies, as formerly; but you have to suffer countless persecutions from evil spirits. You are not tormented by an earthly tyrant, but you are beset by Satan, the most implacable of all tyrants. You are not threatened to be burned alive, but behold the blazing flame of wicked desires in your heart! The martyrs had to fight with wild beasts; you have to fight and to subdue your passions, than which no wild beasts are more furious. The martyrs have been constant, even under the most excruciating pain: may you in like manner vanquish the sinful thoughts which arise in your heart. Thus you may walk in the path of the martyrs." So speaks the holy teacher. Follow this precept, and you will partake of the blessedness of the holy martyrs.

NOTE.—Many other martyrs suffered in Japan, besides those mentioned in the above pages. Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Jesuits, together with a host of Japanese Christians, renewed, almost in our own times, the heroic fortitude of the Christians in the early ages, and thus furnish an unanswerable argument in favor of the Catholic Church to which they all belonged, and which, by being thus proved to be the mother of martyrs, is proved to be the infallible and indestructible spouse of Jesus Christ, the Model and the King of Martyrs.

SIXTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST DOROTHEA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR, AND ST. AMANDUS, BISHOP AND CONFESSOR.

This day the Holy Church again places a heroine before us, who valiantly fought for religion and for Christ in the year of our Lord 304. It is the saintly virgin, Dorothea, who, living at Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, was not only renowned throughout the whole town for her beauty, but still more on account of her angelic devotion and retirement. Apricius, the Governor of Cæsarea, an implacable enemy of Christianity, hearing of her, ordered her to be brought before him, and thus addressed her: "I have sent for you to inform you of the Emperor's command that you shall sacrifice to the gods of the country." Dorothea answered: "The King of Heaven and Earth has forbidden me to serve or sacrifice to any other than Him alone: which of the two shall I obey—the earthly or the heavenly monarch?" "Do not speak of your imaginary god," said Apricius; "sacrifice to our gods, or expect the most terrible torments." "Your torments do not frighten me," replied Dorothea; "what you threaten me with is but little and of short duration: the punishment with which God threatens those who do not adore him is heavy and never ends." The Governor, enraged at so courageous a reply, ordered her to be stretched on the rack and to be most severely whipped. As this, however, had not the effect he desired, he gave her to the charge of two sisters, called Christine, or, as others say, Christa and Callista, who had only lately renounced the Christian faith. These he expected would use all possible means to tempt her to abandon Christ, as they had. Accordingly the two apostates left nothing untried to fulfil the wishes of the Governor, but all was in vain. Not only did they fail, but were reconverted themselves by the Saint, who painted to them in such glowing colors the great sin they had committed by renouncing their faith, that they bitterly repented and resolved to return to the true Church, and die as Christians. This resolution they faithfully kept; for, when interrogated by Apricius as to how they progressed with Dorothea, they replied that she was determined to suffer a thousand deaths rather than renounce her faith, adding that they themselves had done great wrong in forsaking Christ, but that they were now of one mind with Dorothea, and ready to undergo any torment. Apricius, inflamed with rage, forthwith gave orders that both sisters should die at the

stake before the eyes of Dorothea. The order was obeyed, and Dorothea, happy to have snatched two souls out of the jaws of hell, encouraged them until they both had ended their lives in the flames, and thus expiated their former sin. So soon as this was over, Dorothea was again stretched upon the rack, and tortured by having her whole body burned with torches. But the more she was tormented, the more joyful she appeared, because God strengthened her soul to endure. Perceiving that all tortures were in vain, the tyrant sentenced her to be beheaded, which only increased the joy of the saintly virgin. "O Lord, my God!" said she, raising her voice to the Almighty,—“thou chaste bridegroom of my soul, I thank Thee that Thou deignest to invite me to the marriage of the immaculate Lamb.” As this was not the first time that Dorothea had spoken of her heavenly bridegroom, a noble pagan youth, whose name was Theophilus, mockingly said to her, when she was led away to be executed: “Listen, Bride of Christ!—send me some apples or roses from the garden of thy bridegroom, of whom thou hast spoken so much.” In an earnest but gentle tone the virgin answered: “Doubt not, thou shalt have thy wish; I will send them to thee.” Arrived at the place of execution, the Christian heroine knelt down and once more recommended her soul to her heavenly bridegroom. During her prayer she beheld an angel in the form of a beautiful youth, who offered her, in a vase, three beautiful apples and as many fragrant roses. She, however, said to him: “Pray go and take them to Theophilus, and tell him that Dorothea sends this fruit and these flowers to him from her bridegroom’s garden.” After these words she laid her head down, and her young, innocent life was ended by a stroke of the sword. While Theophilus was laughingly relating Dorothea’s promise to his friends, the Martyr’s heavenly messenger approached and presented him, in her name, the apples and roses, as a promised gift of her bridegroom. It being winter, and fruit and flowers nowhere to be found, Theophilus, in amazement, received them, and, inspired by God, cried aloud: “There is no true god but the God of the Christians, and Him only will I henceforth worship!” Apricius, informed of this, commanded Theophilus to appear before Him. Finding him resolved rather to die, like Dorothea, than continue to worship false idols, he gave orders that he should be tortured and beheaded as the saintly virgin had been. The tyrant’s orders suffered no delay, and Theophilus, after a brief martyrdom, went to everlasting happiness, into which Dorothea had entered before him. During his torture, Apricius cried to him: “Unhappy man, spare your body!” But Theophilus courageously replied: “You infinitely more unhappy

judge, take pity on your own soul. I care not for my body, if my soul only enjoys the presence of God for all eternity."



On this day we also find mentioned, in the Roman Martyrology, the holy Bishop Amandus, a son of Serenus, Duke of Aquitaine, and of Amantia, a lady of equal rank. Having received a most pious education, he retired into a monastery in the Isle of Ogia. His father tried to dissuade him from entering holy orders by representing to him the large fortune that he would one day inherit. But Amandus said: "I do not desire earthly goods; I only ask to be permitted to serve God." As his father threatened to disinherit him and bestow his fortune on others, the Saint, unmoved, replied: "If I serve God in the manner I desire, I may count on a much larger heritage in heaven. O, my father, let us both rather fear to lose this latter!"

After several years, which he spent in great sanctity, he made a pilgrimage to Rome, to visit the tombs of the Apostles. In his sleep, St. Peter appeared to him, and admonished him to return to France and preach the Gospel. Amandus obeyed, and having been ordained Bishop, he returned and went from place to place preaching repentance with great zeal. Having heard that in Ghent, a town on the river Scheldt, the inhabitants were so savage and idolatrous that they maltreated and drove away every preacher of the Gospel who came to convert them, he was inflamed with a holy desire to save these miserable people. Cheerfully did he undertake the journey, and, having arrived in the town, he immediately began his mission, and continued it with such unabating zeal that at last the hearts of the barbarians were touched and their eyes opened. But words fail to describe what the Saint suffered when he first came among them; how often he was driven out of the town and cruelly whipped. His invincible patience, however, enabled him to conquer. This fortitude he also evinced on many other occasions, particularly when he fearlessly reproved King Dagobert for several crimes, and, menacing him with eternal damnation, endeavored to move him to repentance. On account of this boldness, the King banished him, but, afterwards recalling him, he asked pardon upon his knees and begged him to baptize the newly-born prince, Sigebert. The holy Bishop consented, and was honored by God with a miracle during the ceremony. It was this. As he ended the prayer customary at baptism, the new-born child answered "Amen" with a clear voice, which filled all present with great astonishment, and was the beginning of the high esteem they

afterwards entertained for the saintly Bishop. Many other miracles, which God granted through the intercession of the Saint, are recorded. It is a well-known fact that he once carried a poor sinner, who had been hung, from the gallows into his house, and, after having prayed over him, brought him back to life. He restored the sight of a blind woman, and healed many that were sick. It may also be related here that God openly and severely punished those who had offended the holy man. One of these, who had derisively laughed at the preaching of the Bishop, became possessed by the Evil Spirit, and was so long tortured by him that he killed himself with his own hands. Another, God chastised with blindness, but, on repenting of his sin, sight was restored to him.

After this, St. Amandus labored unwearily for the salvation of the people, not only in Utrecht, of which city he was Bishop, but also in many other places. He founded many monasteries and churches for the establishment of the true Faith, and converted many thousands to Christianity, and led them on the road to a better world. He cheerfully ended his holy life in the year of our Lord 661. At the hour of his death, St. Aldegundis saw how his soul was carried into heaven, and that many Saints came to meet him and accompanied him to the throne of God. As she desired to know who these Saints were, she received the reply that they were those whom St. Amandus had converted to a virtuous life by his example and teaching, and who, through him, had thus found salvation. They had come to offer their grateful thanks to the soul of the Saint, and lead him triumphantly into heaven.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Dorothea, far from being tempted by the example or the words of the apostate sisters to forsake Christ, on the contrary led the two deserters back again upon the path of salvation. Neither the bad example of those who forsake God, as often happens at the time of Carnival, nor any persecution should have power over you. The number of such persons is very great, and many imagine that sin committed under such circumstances is not as grievous, and that we have less cause</p>	<p>to fear that God will punish it, or that we are not, so to speak, observed by Him, on account of the many who sin at such times. But the wise man has admonished you, long since: "Say not, I shall be hidden from God, and who shall remember me from on high? In such a multitude I shall not be known; for what is my soul to such an immense creation?" (Eccl. 16th chapter.) It may occur that among many criminals an earthly judge forgets a few, or that in some other way punish-</p>
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ment may be escaped; but with God this is impossible. He is the omniscient, just, and Almighty judge from whom nothing is hidden, and who will punish you when you commit wrong with many, as well as when alone. The multitude of the disobedient angels was very great, but nevertheless not one of them remained unknown or unpunished. Such will be the doom of the senseless Carnival fools. No one who sins against God will escape punishment. If you are one of them, punishment will surely overtake you; and what will avail their great number to you, if you are forever lost with them? You must further know that the punishment of God is much more to be feared when many together have offended Him than when there are but few, because the number of sinners will incite His wrath. The larger, therefore, the number of sinners, so much the more should you refrain from sin, that you may not provoke the anger of the Almighty. If it be in your power to keep others from sin, do not neglect it; your God will reward you. But He will also chastise most severely those who, either by example or persuasion, tempt others at such or any other time to incorrect amusements or direct sins.

II. "That which God threatens is heavy and everlasting," said St. Dorothea. The same awful truth was used by St. Amandus to induce King Dagobert to repent. Plant this important truth deep in your heart, and ponder on it often, but particularly in the hour of temptation. Behold what Satan, the world, and the flesh promise in committing sin is but a trifle and transitory, but the punishment it draws down upon you is heavy and lasts eternally. Is it not, therefore, madness when, to acquire a small gain, or for a single

night passed in forbidden pleasures, we wantonly plunge ourselves into the never-ceasing torments of hell? "Short are our pleasures, eternal our pains," says St. Gregory; and St. Cæsarius writes: "Whoso commits sin for the sake of the pleasure it gives, will find that what gave him delight soon passes away, while what he has to suffer on account of it remains for evermore." Let this important truth be kept deep in your heart.

Have you noticed how St. Amandus, after his death, was met and accompanied by those souls to which he had opened the gates of heaven by the example of his virtuous life and his teachings? Have you any hope that something like that will happen to you? Have you reason to believe that you have helped another, either by precept or example, to find the path which leads to salvation? Woe be to you if, instead of this, you have caused rather to fear that you have prevented others from saving their souls, and that by your wicked example, or by your sinful persuasions, you have led them to hell! Woe be to you when these come, in your last hour, or before the Judgment Seat of the Almighty, and, crying vengeance on you, accompany you to hell! What fear will they cause you in your last hour! How they will terrify you at the Judgment seat of God! How they will rave and roar against you in everlasting torment? Did not the blood of Abel call for vengeance against him who killed the body? How much more shall a lost soul cry against him through whose temptation it lost the happiness of heaven and was cast down into hell? "How those who, tempted by others, have forfeited their salvation, will lament! how they will cry for heavenly justice against

those who are the cause of their damnation!" writes St. Thomas of Villanova. Ponder this well, and be watchful that you are not counted	among those who, preventing others from walking in the light, have be- come the cause of their eternal misery.
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SEVENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. ROMUALD, FOUNDER OF THE ORDER OF CAMALDOLI.

Ravenna, a well-known town in Italy, received, in the beginning of the tenth century, from God, the grace to become the birthplace of St. Romuald. The first twenty years of his life he passed like a child of the world, who only seeks after pleasure. Dogs, horses, hunting, riding, play, and society, were the only things he enjoyed, and in which he occupied his time. Of praying, visiting the church, listening to the Word of God, reading holy books, or other Christian exercises, he cared to hear and know nothing; until God, by the following incident, opened his eyes and brought him to the knowledge of Himself, and to repentance. His father, Sergius, Duke of Ravenna, had slain, in a duel, one of his best friends. This Romuald had witnessed, and it affected him to such a degree, that he went to Classis into a Benedictine Monastery, where he remained forty days, praying, fasting, and watching. A pious Friar, who waited upon him, endeavored to disgust him with the world, by picturing to him the many and great dangers to which those living in it were exposed. Romuald could not at first reconcile himself to the idea of relinquishing the world, but, after many prayers and the appearance of St. Apollonarius, who was patron of the monastery, he resolved to dedicate his life to the service of God, and entered the monastery. The life he henceforth led was so austere, so penitential, and so strictly in conformity with all the rules of the Order, that others, who were sluggish in the fulfilment of their duties, reproached by his example, regarded him with hatred, and even conspired against his life. As soon as Romuald became aware of this, he left the monastery and retired, with the knowledge and consent of the Abbot, into the desert to Marinus, a hermit renowned for his sanctity, under whose guidance he attained great perfection. With this, his teacher, he went to Venice and induced the Duke, Peter Urseoli, who, besides having committed many crimes, had unjustly taken possession of the Government, to leave Venice,

and, with many others, to enter upon a religious life. In this way Romuald caused many others, either by personal persuasion or by letters, to repent and reform. Among these was his own father, whom he had prevailed upon to enter a monastery, and when, some years later, he heard of his intention to leave it again, he walked barefooted from France to Ravenna, where his father was. By his fervent exhortations and to his own great happiness, he succeeded in persuading his father to continue his penitential life, after which he returned home, humbly praising and thanking the Almighty.

Indescribable are the labors performed by Romuald for the salvation of his fellow-beings during the hundred years he lived after his conversion. One of his principal works was the reformation of the discipline in the monasteries, which he, in obedience to the word of God, undertook in Venice, Florence, and France. How much the holy man suffered on account of this, how much he was persecuted, no words can tell. But he had the great joy to see his labors bring forth abundant fruit, as he not only restored in many monasteries the former discipline, but also built a hundred new ones in different places and filled them with fervent servants of God. In several monasteries he performed the duties of Abbot, and taught those under him by word and deed how to lead a religious life, although his zeal on more than one occasion almost cost him his life. Not contented, however, with the work he had performed, he desired to preach the Gospel to the heathen and to give his life for the sake of Christ. Hence he concluded to go to Hungary. He had only started on his journey, however, when God, to manifest to him that he was not called to this, sent him a severe sickness, which increased as often as he attempted to proceed on his way and subsided when he retraced his steps. At length, seeing in this the will of the Almighty, he returned and continued to serve God most fervently either in the desert or the monasteries, and to labor for the salvation of others. When he had reached his hundred and second year, he concluded to spend the remainder of his days in solitude, and thus to prepare himself for death. He ascended the Appennines, from whence he had a view over a beautiful valley, after the contemplation of which he was overtaken by sleep. A second Jacob, he saw in his dream a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, upon which Friars ascended and descended, though not in black, but in white habits. The interpretation of this dream God made clear to him. As soon as he awoke he went to the proprietor of the valley, who was named Maldulus, who just at that time had been admonished by God to give, not only the valley, but also the neighboring places, to St. Romuald, on

which to build a monastery and a church. The pious owner obeyed the heavenly mandate. Romuald began without delay to build, and gathered around him some of his most fervent religious, who were willing to serve God in solitude and austerity. With these he inhabited the newly-built monastery; but they changed their habit from black to white, and thus commenced the celebrated Camaldolese Order, taking the name as well from the first owner of the valley as from the valley itself, which was called Camaldoli Desert. The religious of this Order devote their time to praising God, holy meditation, and all manner of penitence. St. Romuald remained in this solitude almost until his last hour; this had been revealed to him by God twenty years before, and also the monastery where he should die. Thither he went, and passed the days still remaining to him in preparing himself for death, as he had already done during more than twenty years. To a Friar, with whom he was very intimate, he said: "For twenty years I have been preparing myself for death, and the more I meditate upon it, the more I feel that I am not worthy to appear before the throne of God." On the last day of his life he dismissed two lay-brothers, who waited upon him, with orders to return the following day. Both, however, remained before the door of his cell, and heard him sigh and pray in raptures of devotion; but on a sudden all was silent. On opening the door, they went towards him and found that he was no more. This happened in the year of our Lord 1027. When, five years later, they opened his coffin, on account of the many miracles which had been wrought at his grave, his body was found, clad in his hair shirt, entirely incorrupt. Four hundred and forty years afterwards they found him in the same state. This great Saint lived to the age of one hundred and twenty years, of which he spent the first twenty in all the frivolities of the world, and the remainder in unsurpassed austerity.

According to St. Peter Damian, his life was a continual fast and penance. But his fasting was quite different from the usual mode. A handful of peas, or some herbs boiled in water, constituted his dinner and supper, especially during the period of the forty days' fast, which he observed twice a year. Not even at a time of sickness would he change his manner of living. Perceiving a special desire for some dish, he had it prepared in the most delicious way and placed upon his table. He would look long at it to increase his appetite, and then give it to the sick or poor. From the Lives of the Saints, which he diligently read, he gathered all kinds of mortifications and penances, in which he tried to imitate them, not without feeling deeply ashamed for not having followed their examples better. "The Lives of the

Saints," observed he one day, "go to my very heart; and when I consider how little I do, I feel as if I ought to die for shame." Three pointed iron girdles were worn by him continually, with his hair shirt, and he slept upon the ground or on straw. In supporting the rigor of the winter, he was much to be admired, but hardly to be imitated. In a word, he tortured his body so cruelly and in such different ways, that it seemed not to belong to him but to his most bitter enemy. He combined, however, with all this rigor to himself, great cheerfulness, and his countenance, always kind and pleasant, cheered every one upon whom his eye fell. He had much to suffer from evil spirits, and still more from the wickedness of man; and yet he never appeared disturbed or despondent. He was once accused of a heinous crime by a godless person, and as he manifested not the least indignation, although he was innocent, everybody was surprised and almost disposed to blame him on that account; but he said: "Is it not much better to suffer innocently than when guilty?" All his sufferings and penances he offered to God as an atonement for the frivolities of his youth, of which he daily repented. He often remarked that of the twenty years he had spent in worldly pleasures, nothing was left him except bitterness; but that the hundred years in which he had endeavored to serve God had filled his soul with consolation and peace.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The virtuous life of St. Romuald offers to you many points for instruction and imitation. Some of these are:

I. St. Romuald does penance during a hundred years for twenty years spent in youthful follies. When will you commence to do penance for time which you have not only passed in frivolities, but, perhaps, even in sin and crime? Begin to-day, for you do not know how much time will be left to you for its accomplishment.

II. From the idly spent years of St. Romuald's life he gathered nothing but bitterness, while those he had dedicated to the service of God filled his soul with consolation and peace. You also will one day experience only fear and bitterness,

if you continue to belong to those children of the world who live only to gratify their passions. If you, however, diligently serve the Lord your God and flee all sensual pleasures, the thought of your having done so will be an indescribable comfort to you when you lie upon your deathbed. With whom, then, will you side? With the frivolous children of the world and licentious Carnival fools, or with the servants of God?

III. St. Romuald prepared himself for death during twenty years, and still feared! Why do you, then, live on from day to day without the smallest fear—you who, perhaps, up to the present time, have not in any way prepared yourself? Do you not know that a long eternity fol-

lows death, and that you will most certainly die miserably if you are not prepared for your last hour?

IV. St. Romuald was ashamed when reading the Lives of the Saints: he reflected how little he had followed their example. Have you not much more reason to be ashamed? Rouse yourself to imitate the Saints in future more earnestly; otherwise you cannot expect to be classed among them in heaven.

V. St. Romuald deprives himself of the food he most craves, and gives it to the poor. Can you not sometimes do the same? And why do you not? Ah! believe me, such self-abnegation and mortification is much more acceptable to God, and much more salutary to your own soul, than you imagine. If you love God and value your salvation do not neglect it, especially if you cannot perform any greater works of penitence, as did St. Romuald.

VI. St. Romuald believed it to be better to suffer when innocent than when guilty. You will have to think the same; for whoever suffers innocently, suffers, according to the words of Saint Peter, as a Christian after the example of Christ. Therefore, never say, "If I had done this or that, if I were guilty of the offence, if I had deserved it, I would suffer patiently." Not so. A Christian should not speak thus. Just because you have not deserved it, suffer patiently; for then you suffer after the example of Christ.

Finally, reflect how strictly St. Romuald fasted, and how he kept not only one forty days' fast during the year, but two, without shortening his life by so doing. I do not ask of you a similar austerity; but the Lord your God asks—nay, He commands you to keep the forty days' fast, instituted by the Apostles as faithfully as in your power. It begins in this or the following month. Resolve to-day to fulfil your duties. You have good reason not to hesitate, as God commands you through His Church. You are bound under pain of eternal damnation to obey the Church. You have sinned, perhaps, more than St. Romuald; therefore you must repent if you would not lose heaven. Of the penances ordained by God Himself, fasting is one of the most salutary; therefore use it to your own profit. Do not imagine, as I have already told you, that your health will suffer by it, or that your life will be shortened. St. Romuald enjoyed better health and lived longer than hundreds of others who seldom or never fasted. Was not his life prolonged for over a hundred years? By the transgression of the fast, you commit sin and offend God: how, then, can you expect to strengthen your health by it or to prolong your life? "Not to fast in the forty days' fast is a sin," writes St. Ambrose. "Whoever fasts not, during the forty days' fast, shall experience the punishment." And again: "It is no trifling sin, brethren."

EIGHTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. JOHN OF MATHA, FOUNDER OF THE ORDER OF THE TRINITARIANS

The Great Founder, John of Matha, was born at Foulcon, in Provence, in the twelfth century. His parents, not less virtuous than noble and wealthy, had dedicated him, soon after his birth, to the service of the Queen of Heaven. Already, in his earliest youth, he evinced great devotion to prayer, as well as tender pity towards the poor. While he was studying, he divided amongst the indigent the money his parents sent him for his own recreation. He finished his studies at Paris with a reputation for great erudition, which, at the same time, was accompanied by so much virtue and piety, that the Archbishop of that city ordained him Priest. At the time of his ordination, a column of fire was seen above his head. During the first Mass that the saintly Priest said, he had a heavenly vision indicating the Order whose founder he was chosen by God to become. He saw, at the consecration, an angel, in the form of a beautiful youth, clad in white, with a red and blue cross upon his garment, and beside him were two chained slaves. He remained for some time in ecstasy before what he saw, and when asked, after the Holy Mass, what had thus transported him, he related his vision; and they inferred from it that he was chosen by God to deliver captives.

To learn more explicitly the will of the Almighty, he went into the desert, where he met St. Felix of Valois, with whom he passed three years in holy exercises and great austerity. One day, as both were sitting near a spring, conversing of God's infinite goodness, a deer came towards them, bearing, in the midst of its antlers, a cross exactly similar to the one St. John had seen upon the garment of the angel on the day he said his first Holy Mass. Moved by this miracle, he related to St. Felix the vision he had had at that time, and, praying most earnestly, they were both admonished by God to devote themselves to the ransoming of Christians who were held captives by the infidels. Both dedicated themselves willingly to the Almighty for this work, and, after further admonitions from God, set out for Rome to communicate their intention to Pope Innocent III. The Pope was well pleased with their plan, but, before giving his consent, desired to take counsel with the Almighty in prayer. During the Holy Mass, which he said to be informed of God's will, he had the same vision which, as already related, St. John had had. Con-

vinced thereby that the design of the Saint was pleasing to heaven, he consented cheerfully that St. John, to further his aim, should become the founder of a new religious Order. He ordered that those belonging to it should wear a white habit, with a red and blue cross on the breast, and, on account of the three colors, they should take the name of Trinitarians, or Brothers of the Order of the Holy Trinity for Ransoming Captives. He himself invested the two holy men with the habit; and John, thanking God for so favorable a beginning, returned with St. Felix to France, where King Philip, with liberal gifts, aided his intentions. The first Monastery was built at a place called Cerf-froid. Having gathered together the youth and men resolved to enter the new Order, he presented St. Felix to them as their Superior, as his own affairs called him once more to Rome. Arrived there, he received from the Pope, for himself and those of his Order, the Church and Convent of St. Thomas of Formio. The holy man had the strongest desire to go to Africa and into captivity to redeem others; but the Pope, who took counsel with him in the most important affairs of the Church, would not permit him to leave Rome; and therefore he sent others of his Order thither. Two of them ransomed 186 captives, and when they returned triumphantly with them, the wish to undertake a voyage to Africa himself grew still stronger in the heart of the Saint. The Pope at length gave his consent. Arrived at his destination, the holy man was unweariedly occupied in strengthening the Christian slaves in their faith, and in comforting them with the hope of a speedy liberation. His zeal incurred the hatred of the infidels to such a degree that it almost cost him his life. One day he was found in the streets of Tunis almost swimming in his own blood, the barbarians having maltreated him so fearfully that they believed he could not possibly survive their cruelty. He, however, remained cheerful, considering it great happiness to suffer for the sake of Christ. So soon as he had somewhat recovered his strength, he gathered together the slaves he had ransomed, and went with them on board a ship; but some unbelievers, who had followed him, took away the helm, broke the mast, tore the sails, and then, pushing the ship into the sea, were sure that all on board would perish. Trusting in God, St. John hung his cloak on a pole instead of a sail, and, ascending the deck with a crucifix in his hand, he implored God to be their helm. The Almighty heard and answered his prayer: the ship came safely to land, a few days later, in the haven of Ostia, to the great astonishment of all who witnessed their arrival. After this the Saint travelled through Italy, France, and Spain, endeavoring to move the rich and

great with pity towards the poor captives, and to supply him with sufficient means for their ransom. Inspired by God, kings, princes, and nobles aided him in his undertaking with liberal gifts. In the above-named kingdoms the Saint built new monasteries for his religious, whose numbers daily increased. At last the Pope recalled him to Rome, where he ended his laborious life by a happy death. During the last two years of his life he was chiefly occupied with visiting the sick and those in prison, in begging alms for the poor, and in preaching the Word of God. As regarded himself, he never relaxed in the austerity to which he had accustomed his body from his youth—not even in the last days of his life. His only sustenance was water and bread. He never allowed himself any recreation, but endeavored to subdue himself in everything. Feeling the approach of his last hour, he called his religious around him, and exhorted them to constancy in their love towards the captives, in consideration of the many souls they might save from the danger of their losing the true Faith and, with it, all hope of salvation. After this exhortation, he once more turned his mind to heaven, and, comforted by the thought that his Order was extending in many kingdoms, and contributing to the salvation of the people, he committed his soul, burning with adoration to God and love to men, into the hands of his Creator, in the 61st year of his life and 1213 of the Christian Era.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The principal reason of St. John's desire to deliver the Christian captives, was his anxiety lest their souls should be lost. How holy was this care! how salutary this desire! If you cannot contribute 'anything to so holy' a work, pray sometimes fervently to God for such unhappy captives. Let, however, your first care be to consider if, perhaps, your own soul be not in a much more severe and dangerous captivity. Through mortal sins men become captives, slaves to the devil. Sins are, according to the declaration of the prophet, the chains which bind the soul. Should your soul be in such a state, have compassion on it, and deliver

it from so sad a captivity. The priests, to whom Christ has given power to bind and to loose, can release your soul from these chains; but to obtain the remission of your sins you must repent and confess them. Do not neglect this. Should, however, the priestly absolution release you from the chain of your sin and your shameful captivity, take care not to return wantonly into bondage, and be obliged to wear the same fetters again. In other words, guard yourself against sinning again, as you know not whether the Lord your God will grant you time and grace to free yourself once more from such bonds. St. Gregory Nazianzen admon-

ishes us thus: "Take care that you are not again enchained, and that you lose not once more the spiritual freedom of your soul, because it is by no means certain that, freed from your fetters, you rise a second time to life." It is certainly true that you, by once more falling into the old sin, or committing a new one, become not only unworthy of heavenly grace, but deserve also severe punishment. Therefore Christ said to the infirm man: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee" (St. John 14). "The man who, after having obtained remission of sin, offends God again, excites His wrath, and draws down upon himself greater punishment," says Theodoret. St. Peter compares such persons to brutes, and adds: "Their latter state is become unto them worse than the former" (2 Ep. Peter, 2nd chapter). These words, he heard from Christ Himself, who says of a man over whom Satan regains power: "And the last state of that man is made worse than the first" (St. Matthew, 12th chapter).

II. St. John, in his youth, while yet studying, gives the money which he receives for his recreation to the poor. Oh! how it would comfort and cheer the last hour of many a man if he had given to the needy at least a part of the money he has squandered in enjoyments, some-

times even in such as are sinful and forbidden. Such enjoyments pass quickly away and leave nothing but an unquiet conscience and a heavy account to render to the Almighty; while that which is given to the poor is deposited with God, to recompense the giver. What are your intentions? What are you able to do in future? St. Chrysostom writes:—"You have not received wealth to dissipate it in pleasures, but that you may divide it among the poor." If you do not fulfil this design of God—if you spend it in luxury, in vain, or perhaps sinful, amusement, in the maintenance of some useless animal, or in some other frivolity, instead of comforting the poor—oh! woe to you when you have to appear before the throne of the Almighty. "What will you answer to your Judge," said St. Blaise, "when, having the walls of your apartments luxuriously decorated, you permit a poor beggar to walk about half nude?—when you ornament your horses with gold and silver, but give not even a miserable garment to your brother who comes to you clad in rags? What will you answer, when you give food in abundance to your dogs, but none to a starving beggar—nay, perhaps scorn to look at him?" The lesson to be deduced from these words is too clear to need any explanation.

NINTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. APOLLONIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR, AND ST JOSEPH OF LEONISSA, MARTYR.

In the year of our Lord 248, there lived at Alexandria a magician, who foretold a terrible misfortune to the heathen inhabitants of the city, if they did not allay the wrath of the

gods by the execution of their greatest enemies, the Christians. The blind and credulous people, infatuated by this wicked man, sought everywhere for the Christians, torturing and putting them to death in the most cruel manner. Among these was Apollonia, a virgin, known and venerated through the whole city on account of her virtues. Bringing her into one of their temples, they demanded that she should pay divine honors to their idols. As she, however, courageously refused to do this, but cried with a loud voice: "Jesus Christ is the only true God; Him we must worship;" they deprived her of all her teeth, striking part of them out with stones, and tearing out others with brutal violence. The torture was fearful, but Apollonia not only bore it with unmoved fortitude, but even appeared cheerful and joyous. The heathens, exasperated, threatened to burn her alive if she longer refused to renounce Christ. The Saint replied: "Shall I renounce Him whom I have chosen and faithfully loved as my bridegroom? No, never! However cruel may be the manner in which you condemn me to die, I am prepared to suffer it a thousand times rather than forsake my God." Hardly had she uttered these words when they carried her out of the city, and, having made a great fire, said to the Christian heroine: "Sacrifice immediately to our gods, or we cast you into the flames." Apollonia remained one moment immovable, seemingly deliberating what she should do, while in reality, deep in her heart, she was imploring heaven to aid her. Suddenly, burning with love to God, she tore herself out of the hands of her tormentors and leaped with unprecedented heroism, of her own accord, into the flames, as if to declare to the whole world that she was more ready to die for the sake of her Saviour than the heathens were to immolate her. The body of the Saint was soon consumed by the fire, but her soul, burning with heavenly love, was taken to heaven, there to be rewarded with the crown of martyrdom. All present were stunned with amazement at such heroism, and many of them were by it induced to receive the Christian faith. The bones which remained unconsumed were collected by the Christians, and held in great honor. To this day, even, is this Christian heroine invoked by all those who suffer with toothache; and experience shows that such invocations are seldom made in vain.



To this short biography of St. Apollonia I will add a brief sketch of the life of a Saint who belongs more to our time, as he was not added to the number of the Saints until the year 1746.

His name is Joseph of Leonissa, and he was born, in 1556, at Leonissa, a town in the province of Abruzzo. When quite an infant his life had been saved by a special act of providence. His mother, who had taken him into her bed, fell asleep, and would have crushed him, had not an invisible hand struck her so severely that she awoke: thus was the child miraculously preserved from death. In childhood he was not childlike, but evinced a great love of virtue. He was only seven years old when he fasted every Friday on water and bread, and did the same every day preceding a feast of Mary. At that age, also, he chastised himself by flagellation, and passed many hours of the night in prayer. After the loss of his parents, he was brought up by a cousin at Viterbo. He was well instructed in the liberal arts, and when, at seventeen years of age, a wealthy marriage was proposed to him, he refused it and entered the seraphic order of the Capuchins, in which he faithfully remained until his death. On receiving the habit, the name of Euphrenius, which had been given him in baptism, was changed to Joseph. His religious life consisted in the constant practice of virtue. His favorite exercises were prayer and mortification, and he spent the greater part of the night in pious meditation. Sometimes, while praying, he fell into an ecstasy, and once he was found suspended in the air. At the time of Holy Mass, which he said with particular devotion, he was several times seen surrounded by a heavenly light. He fasted three times every week upon water and bread: sometimes he took nothing during three days, and when he was obliged to eat prepared food, he destroyed the savor of it with ashes and wormwood. Upon his naked body he wore an iron cuirass, and round his loins a sharp iron girdle. Almost daily he scourged himself with iron chains. As soon as he was ordained Priest, he received the commission of preacher and apostolic missionary, the functions of which he fulfilled with great zeal, to the salvation of innumerable souls. Longing to suffer for the sake of Christ, he set out for Constantinople as soon as he had received permission to preach the Gospel there. On his arrival, after fervent prayer, he went to the Imperial palace, requesting to see the Emperor, as he was desirous of first converting him to the truth of the Gospel. The guards, however, struck and abused him, and then drove him away. As he thus could not gain access to the palace, the Saint directed his zeal towards the Christian captives and slaves, comforted them, and exhorted them to patience and firmness in their faith. After some time, he once more went to the palace to see the Emperor and endeavor to convert him. He passed through several apartments unnoticed, as the guards were sleeping; but no sooner was he seen by some

of the courtiers, than he was seized, and, being carried before the court judge, he was condemned to die upon the gibbet. The sentence was immediately carried into execution. The Saint was carried to the gallows, on which two iron chains of unequal length were fastened, each having attached to it a strong iron hook. The Saint ascended the ladder, and the executioner, having pierced a hole through his left hand, thrust the hook of the shorter chain through it; after which, having pierced a hole through his right foot, and placed the other hook in it, he pushed the ladder away, and thus left the servant of God suspended. Three long days did the Saint suffer this torture, not only with fortitude, but with visible gladness to be sacrificed for his Saviour, and preaching during the whole time to the assembled people. As the executioners perceived that some of the populace were moved by the words of the martyr, they kindled a large fire under the gallows, thinking that the ascending smoke would prevent the Saint from speaking. But as this had not the desired effect, they made so much noise, by the beating of drums, that his words could no longer be heard. After the Saint had thus suffered for three days and nights, God sent one of His angels, who, freeing the Saint from his chains, healed his wounds so entirely that only the scars remained; then, refreshing him with bread and wine, he admonished him to return to Italy. St. Joseph obeyed, and arrived in Italy, where he resumed his former functions of zealous preacher and missionary until his 56th year, when, in the monastery of Amatrice, he was called to receive his eternal reward on the 4th February, 1612. Many miracles were wrought by God, through the intercession of this faithful servant, not only during his life, but after his death. Passing over the many sick whom the holy man healed instantaneously, the fact is well known that one day, when he arrived with a companion at the river Tronto, and found it excessively swollen in consequence of heavy rains, the Saint, having prayed, spread his cloak upon the water, and, placing himself and his companion upon it, crossed safely to the other shore. It is also well known that he had often miraculously multiplied bread, so as to have a sufficient supply for the poor. On his journey to Constantinople, the ship was detained by contrary winds. As all the provisions were consumed, and there was no opportunity to procure a fresh supply, the holy man, taking a small piece of dry bread, and making the sign of the cross upon it, gave of it to those present as much as they desired, and it increased in his hands to such an extent that for thirty days it provided them with food. It is further acknowledged that the holy man was particularly honored by God, foretelling many things, and bringing many secrets to

light, by which gifts he was often enabled to prevent wicked people from consummating their evil designs. It may also justly be called a miracle that the Saint, among so many temptations, preserved his innocence and angelic purity, until his death. When he, after his general confession, and after having received the Holy Sacraments, had happily expired, with fervent meditation on the love of his crucified Saviour, it was desired that his death should be kept secret; but the children upon the street cried: "The Saint is dead! the Saint is dead!" After his death, his body exhaled a delicious fragrance. More than thirty lame persons, and twenty who were dangerously wounded, together with many sick persons, were cured at the grave of the Saint, or by touching his relics: a proof not only of the esteem in which the Saint was held, but also of the truth of the Catholic Church, in which St. John had lived, verified at a time when the Church was accused of error and superstition by those who belonged not to its fold.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The pain which Saint Apollonia endured by the beating out and tearing away of her teeth must have been most dreadful. And yet she suffered it cheerfully for the love of Christ. If you should suffer in your teeth, call on the holy martyr, that by her intercession you may be freed from your pain. In this you will do well. Should it, however, be the will of God that, notwithstanding your prayers, you still suffer, endeavor to imitate the example of the Saint, and bear it patiently from love to God. The grace you need for this ask through the intercession of the Saint. Besides this, meditate that if there were no other pain in hell but toothache, lasting one or two months, would you not be willing to try everything to avoid this pain? Why, then, are you not doing so, though you know that the pains of hell are much more dreadful than anything you can bear upon this earth, and that they last, not a few months

only, but during eternity? Further: should God reveal to you that as soon as you have become guilty of a mortal sin you should experience a terrible toothache, which should continue to torture you for a whole year, day and night, would you commit the sin? Would you not guard yourself most carefully from doing so? I feel assured that if you could obtain honors and riches through the sin, you would nevertheless not become guilty of it, if ever you have experienced what it is to have a toothache. How, then, dare you sin, knowing that it subjects you to the danger of much greater and everlasting pains in hell, not only in your teeth, but in every conceivable manner? Why are you not obedient to the commandments of God, and escape those pains?

II. The suffering that St. Joseph bore upon the gallows, during three days and nights, must have been excruciating, particularly on his hand and foot. But he endured it

joyfully, out of his great love for Christ. But tell me, what is all the suffering of this Saint compared with what you will have to bear, not only for three days, but for evermore, in your hand and foot, if you use them now in criminal actions? And has not this often happened already? Ah! think over the past, repent of it deeply, and resolve earnestly never again to use either hand or foot in any manner to offend God. Should you, however, suffer in these, or other parts of your body, bear it patiently and own that you have deserved much more through the abuse of your

limbs. "Repine not; blaspheme not! Say not, 'Why am I to suffer so much?' but say, rather: 'I have sinned; the punishment I suffer is not so great as my offences deserve.'" Thus speaks St. Isidore. Consider, furthermore, that it is a grace of God when you suffer in your limbs, as you can atone in this manner the wrongs you have done with them, and by so doing escape the much greater pains which you would have to suffer in the other world. "It is no punishment, but mercy, if we suffer in the flesh for what we have sinned in the flesh," says St. Gregory.

TENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. SCHOLASTICA, VIRGIN.

St. Scholastica, a sister of St. Benedict, the renowned Founder of the Benedictine Order, was born of noble parentage, in the Duchy of Spoleto, in Umbria, and received a very pious education. Already in her earliest youth, had her pious mother impressed most earnestly upon her, above everything, to revere the Christian faith, to despise the vanity of the world, to fear sin, love virtue, and obey all the commandments of God. Her life has clearly proved that the instructions of her mother had taken deep root in her heart. As she grew up, she became one of the most beautiful maidens in the neighborhood, and she had many rich and noble suitors. But Scholastica had, early in life, consecrated herself to God, and therefore refused all offers. She avoided all society, and loved and sought solitude, although she possessed naturally a lively disposition and a cheerful heart. In her attire she allowed herself no useless adornment, much less frivolous luxuries, as she had often heard her pious mother say that costly apparel did not make people estimable, but that the greatest adornments of a maiden were virtue and retirement. Not even in those she associated with could she endure indecorous attire, from the just reason that she feared it might scandalize others. After her brother had retired from the world and commenced his holy life, an irrepressible desire took possession of her to follow him. She therefore divided her wealth among the poor, and, accompanied by a single servant, she set out for

Monte Cassino, where already many religious, under the care of her brother, led a most perfect life. Benedict, with several religious, went to meet her before the enclosure. Scholastica informed her brother of her plans, with which he was well pleased, having already had them revealed to him in a heavenly vision. Building her a small cell, not far from his monastery, he drew up her rules, which differed but little from those of his own religious. The virgin, so anxious to serve God, had scarcely regulated her life and that of her maid according to these rules when the fame of it spread more and more, until it had reached the countries round about. From all parts came pious virgins to the Saint, desiring, like her, to serve God, far from the vanities of the world; and St. Benedict had to provide a dwelling where these souls, so anxious for their salvation, might abide. He therefore built a convent for them, and thus commenced the world-renowned Benedictine Order for Women, which afterwards spread so much over the earth that, in the West only, many thousand Convents of this Order might be counted, into which many princesses and ladies of high rank retired and there acquired great sanctity.

Scholastica was Abbess of the first convent, and fulfilled her duties most perfectly. She instructed those committed to her charge in all Christian virtues, not only by word but by her example. She was the most zealous in all devotional exercises, the most austere in fasting, and the most watchful in regard to keeping the regulations of the Order. She maintained firmly her opinions about the retirement of all religious, and avoided as much as possible all idle talk with people of the world. "Solitude," she often said, "is the guardian angel of devotion." Even her saintly brother she saw but once a year, and only conversed with him of God and holy things. These meetings, however, did not take place in the monastery of St. Benedict, but in a house not far off, and in the presence of several other monks. One day, as St. Benedict, after much edifying conversation, was sitting at the table, Scholastica said to him: "I pray you, do not leave me to-night: remain until the morrow, that we may continue our discourse upon the happiness of heaven." Benedict replied that he neither could nor would comply with her request, as it was against the rules of his monastery to remain away at night. Having received this reply, Scholastica laid her folded hands upon the table, and, bending her head over them, begged of God graciously to grant that she might receive the comfort of conferring longer with her brother on spiritual matters. And, behold, a terrific thunderstorm, accompanied by so heavy a rain, suddenly arose, that St. Benedict and his companions were under

the necessity of delaying their return, and Scholastica had the great joy of spending the whole night in pious conversation. Benedict had not failed to perceive that the storm arose in answer to his sister's prayer, as the air had previously been calm and quiet and not a cloud had overshadowed the sky. He therefore said to her: "May God forgive you, sister: what have you done?" She replied: "See: I requested a favor of you, and you refused it to me; I asked it of my God, and He granted it to me." After passing the hours of night in holy conversation, to their mutual joy and edification, they parted to meet no more in this life, as, three days later, St. Scholastica was called away, at the age of sixty, in the year 543, to behold Him in heaven to speak of whom had been her delight on earth. St. Benedict, who, at the time that his sister expired, was praying in his cell, saw her soul, in the form of a dove, fly towards heaven. Several pious nuns also saw their saintly Abbess ascend gloriously into heaven, and cried, with many tears: "Intercede for us, O beloved mother, with our bridegroom, Jesus Christ, that we may be permitted to follow thee in the path thou hast walked before us." Benedict praised God, and sent some monks of his Order to bring the body of his departed sister to his monastery, where he deposited it in the grave he had prepared for himself.

The life of this Saintly Virgin, related more circumstantially, contains yet much more in her praise; but I will only add how she accustomed herself to bear sorrow and grief. At such times she fastened her eyes upon the crucifix, meditating how He, her God, had suffered out of His love to her. This not only imparted patience to her, but also chased away all sadness, as she herself one day declared, saying; "One single glance upon my crucified God clears away every sorrow, and sweetens all I have to suffer."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. In sorrow and sadness St. Scholastica fixed her eyes upon the crucifix, and meditated how Christ, out of His love for her, had suffered. By this means she armed herself with patience and bore her sorrows lightly. What excellent means to comfort and cheer ourselves in our hours of vicissitude and affliction! Make use of it whenever sorrow assails you. Raise your eyes to your crucified God and say to yourself, "How my cru-

cified Saviour suffered out of love to me! Why should I not bear this little cross for Him? It is nothing compared with what He has borne!" This single point would be enough to hold up for imitation to-day, but I will add yet another. St. Scholastica avoided as much as possible the society of others, and above all things loved retirement. When, however, she is obliged to receive any, she confers with them on pious sub-

jects. During an entire night she converses with her holy brother on nothing but God and spiritual matters. Why are you so devoted to idle company, perhaps even to the detriment of your house and family? Why is the monotony of your own home disagreeable, compared with your conversations with others? Of what and with whom do you speak? Oh! of how many hundreds of sins would you now be guiltless, had you not indulged in so many idle and unnecessary visits, and had you been more circumspect in your words? "In the multitude of words there shall not want sin" (Proverbs, chap. x), says the Holy Ghost. You have conversed much with others, and thus, surely, have been guilty of many a sin. Understand and repent of your faults. Abstain from idle and unnecessary visits. Keep a watch on your words. If you do not speak of God, say, at least, nothing to offend Him. Why, however, should you not sometimes converse upon God and holy things? We are generally inclined to speak of what we love. Do not you, then, love God? "Oh! happy tongue," cries St. Isidore, "which can only speak of the Almighty and of heavenly things!"

II. St. Scholastica was in her mode of dressing herself very

modest and plain, and could not suffer others to dress immodestly, as she feared it might give cause for scandal. Believe me, you may most certainly give your neighbors many and grave occasions to sin, if your mode of dress is not modest. These sins you have to answer for at the Throne of God. It is you who will be punished for them. Upon your head will they cry for vengeance to whom you have given cause of scandal, even although you may have had no direct intention of doing so. Those frivolous excuses you make now will not avail you before the Throne of God. Consider well your duties to others. St. Jerome writes: "When a woman decks herself indecorously, and endeavors to attract the eyes of men, she may cause no harm; but she will, nevertheless, suffer eternal punishment for it, because she has offered poison, though no one partook of it." St. Bernardin of Sienna says: "What does it avail that you have no evil intentions, and therefore, in this regard, do no wrong, when you know, or ought to know, what evil might result from it? You will not be condemned for your intentions, because they were not wicked; but you will be condemned for the sins which were the result of your indecorous way of adorning your person."

ELEVENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY

ST. WILLIAM, DUKE OF AQUITAIN, HERMIT

A very extraordinary example of penitence is presented to us in the life of St. William. He was Duke of Aquitain, and led, in his youth, a very licentious life. Besides other crimes of which he is accused, he lived for three years, a second Herod,

with the wife of his own brother. His greatest delight was in contests and feuds, and he was never so happy as when disturbing the peace and happiness of others. He opposed the lawful Pope, Innocent, and protected the anti-Pope, Anacletus, for which cause he was excommunicated. St. Bernard, who caused many to submit to the true Pope, Innocent, endeavored, at first by writing, and afterwards orally, to persuade William to desist from the dissension; but all was in vain. The Saint, therefore, had recourse to means hitherto never made use of. He went into the church to say Mass. After the consecration, he took the Host upon the patten, left the church with it, and, showing it to the Duke—who, being excommunicated, dared not enter the holy edifice—he said, in a solemn but menacing voice: “We have, until now, exhorted you; but you have despised our counsel. Behold the Son of the Virgin, the Lord and Head of that Church which you persecute, comes now to you Himself! Your Judge, before whose name every one bows the knee, is here present—your Judge, into whose hands you will soon have to commit your soul! Will you despise Him also? Will you close your ear to Him, as well as to His servants?” The Duke, hearing these words, trembled, and, sinking to the earth, wept bitterly; nor would he be raised from the ground. St. Bernard, seeing his contrition, commanded him to rise, and listen to what he had to say. “Submit,” said he, “to Innocent, the true Pope, and be obedient to him. Reconcile yourself with the Bishop of Poitiers, who is here present. You have driven him from his See; reinstate him in it. Conciliate the Almighty, and endeavor to heal all dissension among your subjects.” William, terrified, could only stammer a few words; but, turning to the Bishop of Poitiers, he begged his forgiveness, and restored him to his See. The willingness of the Duke to reform appeased Bernard, and, having once more admonished him to repent, and received his promise to do penance, the Saint returned to the altar and finished the Mass. The Duke, however, repaired to his residence, repented of his misdeeds with many tears, and determined to begin a steady course of penance.

To put this resolution into practice, he went into the desert to a saintly hermit, and asked him how to spend his future life. This hermit sent him to another, who prescribed him most severe rules, which the Duke received without a murmur. He put on his body an iron shirt of mail, fastening it with small chains, so that it could not easily be unloosed; over this he wore a garment of hair-cloth, placed an iron helmet on his head, and, thus habited, he went to Rome, humbly to beg the Pope's pardon. The Pope, hesitating to trust so sudden a conversion, sent him

to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who, greatly admiring his penitence, absolved him from his sins. Further, at the Duke's request, he had a small hut built for him, in which William spent seven years in most austere penance. His only sustenance was bread and water; his bed, the bare ground; his pillow, a stone; and his garments, the same as heretofore related. His whole employment consisted in penance, prayer, and other devotional exercises. He unceasingly thanked the Almighty for sparing him from dying in impenitence, and thus being lost for ever. Satan, disgusted by the austerity of William's life, tempted him from the hour of his reformation, both day and night. He also instigated his friends, when, after a long search, they had found him, to use every persuasion in their power to induce him to return to his Dukedom. The penitent, however, neither lent an ear to the temptations of Satan nor to the words of his friends, but continued the exercise of his severe penance. At the expiration of seven years, the recollection of all his false friends had said to him began to disturb his peace of mind. He mused over it, became sluggish in his penance, lost his zeal for devotional exercises, and at last went so far as to leave his hut and set out for his home. While on his journey he arrived at a place where a fortress was besieged, which, however, seemed invincible. He witnessed the scene for some time, and then observed to some one near him, that if he were in command of the forces he would soon be in possession of the fortress. The commanding officer, being informed of this remark, requested William to lead his soldiers to an attack. The Duke, consenting, prepared himself to storm the fortress, when God, to punish him, suddenly deprived him of his sight, so that, to the great derision of all, he had to abandon his undertaking. He was, however, so fortunate as instantly to acknowledge his fault, and made a vow that he would return to the desert if God would restore his sight. His vow was accepted, his sight restored, and William, returning to the desert, resumed his former austere life, and continued in it perseveringly. To serve God more effectually, he changed his place of residence several times, until at last he found himself in the territory of Sienna, in a wild, desolate valley, formerly called the Stable of Rhodes, and there, in great holiness, he remained for the rest of his life. He supposed he would be entirely concealed from the world in this valley, but the fame of his sanctity soon spread abroad, and many came to him who desired to live and do penance under his direction. In this manner the Order of the Hermits, which in Italy was almost extinct, was renewed. When at last the penitent Saint felt that his strength was exhausted, as well by age as by austere penances, he repaired to Castellione,

received the Holy Sacrament with great devotion, and died soon after his return. After his death, which took place in 1156, God conferred so radiant an expression on his countenance that people continued long to gaze upon him with delight. The grave of this Saint, over which, at first, a small chapel and afterwards a large church was built, God caused to be renowned by the performance of many miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "Your Judge is here present ; will you despise Him also ?" These were the words of St. Bernard, which softened William's callous heart. Remember them as often as you enter a church, and forget them not while you remain there. Think that your guardian angel speaks to you, as St. Bernard to the hardened Duke. Behold, your Judge is here, before whom you will soon appear to give an account of your life, and from whom you will receive the judgment upon which depends your whole eternity. Your faith teaches you that this is true. Learn from it how you ought to behave in church. How would a condemned criminal act towards his king, if he hoped to receive pardon for his crimes ? Answer this question to yourself, and as he would act towards his king, even so act you to your Creator. Truly, if you behave irreverently in church—if you allow your eyes to wander about, if you bridle not your tongue, and, instead of bending your knees at the proper moment, stand insolently upright—you show, either that you do not believe your God to be present, or that you are so godless as to despise Him.

Are you hardened enough to continue in this ? Take heed of the words of St. Bernard : "Your Judge is here present ; will you despise Him also ?" Or do you fancy that your irreverence in

church is of but little consequence, and not so liable to punishment as they tell you from the pulpit ? Oh ! how you deceive yourself ! Read the whole Gospel through, and you will not find that Christ censured anything more severely than the irreverence which was practised in the Temple of Jerusalem. He reprov'd it twice. The first time was when He commenced preaching, and drove the buyers and sellers out of the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers. The second time was shortly before His Passion, when He even lashed, with a whip made of cords, those who desecrated the house of God. This surely teaches how such irreverence displeases Him, and how deserving of punishment He thinks it. Certain it is our churches surpass by far the Temple of Jerusalem in sanctity. It follows, therefore, that irreverence in our churches must be more deserving of punishment than the irreverence which was not even manifested in the Temple, but only in the porch thereof. Judge for yourself, therefore, if you are not greatly mistaken in presuming that such irreverence is not of much consequence, and therefore not to be deserving of punishment. "Many sins were committed at Jerusalem," writes St. Vincent Ferrer, "but none was punished by our gentle Saviour like this. Let it teach you how much

the Lord our God is incensed at irreverence in church."

II. St. William praised and thanked God unceasingly that he had been spared from dying and eternally perishing in his sin. Have you not innumerable reasons to do the same? Where would you be if you had died in those sins that you so wilfully committed? Surely in hell. Who has preserved your life? Who has prevented death from striking you? Nothing but the infinite goodness of God—the same God whom you had so often and so grievously offended. He has preserved your life in preference to thousands of others, and until this hour has kept you from hell. You may, in truth, say, with King David (Psalm xciii.): "Unless the Lord had been my keeper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell."

How inexpressibly great is the grace of God, to help you and protect you from hell! Who can praise it enough? Surely only those who can conceive the horror of its eternal fire! How unparalleled is your ingratitude, if you do not often give thanks to your good God for so priceless a boon. "Give thanks to the Almighty," says St. Chrysostom, "that He has not taken you away in the midst of your sin." St. William diligently imitated the penitent King David, who also called to God (Psalm lxxxv.): "I will praise Thee, O Lord, my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify Thy name for ever! For Thy mercy is great towards me, and Thou hast delivered my soul out of the lower hell."

Let me call your attention to a few more points in the life of St. William.

I. No sooner had he become penitent, than Satan commenced to tempt him. Such are the ways of the Evil One. If a sinner en-

deavors to free himself from his chains, desiring henceforth to serve God, he tempts him strongly. For this reason, therefore, the Holy Ghost admonishes us, and says: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation" (Eccles., chap. ii.).

Let not these temptations prevail against you: God, whom you wish to serve, will not leave you a prey to Satan.

II. For seven years was St. William violently tempted, day and night; but, not allowing himself to be overcome, he was not accountable for it. Perhaps you are tempted just as long, just as violently; but this will not be accounted a sin to you if you are not overcome by it, and if you do not like the temptation and remain under its influence.

III. For seven years did St. William struggle against these temptations. Satan could neither force nor persuade him to leave the desert. Neither can he force you, with all his temptations. Why, then, are you sometimes so terrified on account of the temptations which you suffer against your will and from no fault of your own? Satan said to Christ: "Cast thyself down" (Matthew, chap. iv.). He could not cast Him down, notwithstanding all his power. You, too, he cannot, with all his might, cast into sin. Despise him, therefore; you will find him poor and contemptible, if you do not consent to him.

IV. After seven years, St. William allowed himself to be conquered by Satan, and he, cunningly persuaded by him, left the desert. Thus it may be that you, though you resist long, at last fall into his snares. Hence, do not rely too much upon yourself, and do not become lukewarm in the service of

God. You must be constantly on the watch, and never neglect your prayers.

V. William came to the knowledge of his fault, returned to his former penitential life, and remained steadfast. God rewarded him, afterwards, almost with more grace than he enjoyed before, as we learn from his life. If you have done wrong, do not persevere in it, but begin to serve God with new zeal. Combat the Arch-Fiend valiantly, and the wrong you have been guilty of will do you no further harm; and the Almighty may look down upon you more graciously than before. "Fight

like a brave soldier," says Thomas à Kempis, "and if you sometimes succumb, from weakness, take courage, and arm yourself with the hope that you may receive still more grace from God." "For," says St. Gregory, "as a commander likes better the soldier who, after having once fled, returns and valiantly attacks the enemy, than him who has never fled, yet is cowardly; even so the Lord our God loves him better who, after sin, serves Him with greater zeal, than him who, though he is not guilty of great wrong, yet has been always sluggish in His service."

TWELFTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. EULALIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR, OF BARCELONA, AND ST. EULALIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR, OF EMERITA.

The Christian world possesses a truly shining example of heroism, in the life of St. Eulalia. She was born of noble and virtuous parents, at Barcelona, in Spain. She was scarcely fourteen years of age, when the cruel tyrant Dacian came to Barcelona with the imperial order to extinguish Christianity. St. Eulalia, actuated by the desire to devote her life entirely to Christ, had already consecrated her virginity to Him, and longed to shed her blood for love of her Bridegroom. She therefore waited not to be called by the tyrant, but, inspired by God, she went to him and reproved him for his cruelty to the Christians. Dacian, astonished at her audacity, asked who she was, that she dared to speak thus to an imperial governor? "I am a Christian," answered she: "a handmaid of Jesus Christ, the King of all kings." This was enough for Dacian. He gave immediate orders that her garments should be torn off, and her whole body scourged with whips. But the more the executioners whipped her, the braver did Eulalia show herself. "You may scourge me as long as you please," said she; "I feel not your lashes, God is with me—He gives me strength." Dacian, enraged, ordered her to be stretched upon the rack; afterwards her

body was torn with iron combs, and burned with torches; melted lead was poured on her head, her wounds were washed with vinegar, and finally, her eyes were burned out with wax tapers. All who witnessed it were horrified at such terrible tortures, inflicted on a virgin only fourteen years old. Eulalia alone remained fearless, and cried, with a loud clear voice: "I am a Christian, I suffer as a Christian, for love of Jesus, my Bridegroom! He is my strength; I trust in Him!" After this, addressing Heaven, she said: "Oh! my Jesus! I thank Thee that Thou hast given me an opportunity to suffer for Thee! The more they lacerate my body, the more I love Thee!" The rage of Dacian at her words is not to be described; and, knowing of no further torture, he ordered that, wounded and bruised as she was, she should be dragged naked through the whole city, for public derision, and afterwards crucified. This public derision was dreadful for the chaste virgin, but she bore it with no less fortitude. It was wonderful to behold her joy, when, as they proceeded to crucify her, she thought that she should die the same death her Saviour had died for her. Even on the cross she repeated her confession of the Christian Faith, declaring her adoration of her heavenly Bridegroom, and giving her heroic soul triumphantly into His hands. Her chaste soul was seen soaring towards heaven, in the form of a white dove. According to the Roman Book of Martyrs, this glorious martyrdom took place in the reign of the Emperor Diocletian.



The same book speaks also, on the 10th day of this month, of another virgin and martyr, of the same name, who received the crown of martyrdom at the time of Diocletian and Maximian. This St. Eulalia was born in the celebrated town of Emerita, or Merida. Donatus, a devout priest, had instructed her from childhood so perfectly in the Christian Faith, that all her thoughts were directed towards a pious life. Reading of the holy Martyrs, kindled in her heart an ardent desire to die like them, for the sake of Christ. When she heard that an imperial messenger had arrived in Spain with the order either to persuade the Christians to abandon their faith or to exterminate them, she was full of joy, hoping to be among the victims. Not long afterwards, an order was promulgated that all the inhabitants of Emerita should assemble on a certain day, to be present at the heathen worship, on pain of death. The parents of Eulalia retired with her to a farm, ten miles distant from the city, as they feared that at her tender age—she had barely entered on her twelfth year—

she could not endure martyrdom. Eulalia, however, soon perceived why her parents had fled from the town; and her desire to suffer for the sake of Christ allowed her no peace at the farm. One night, she secretly left the farm, accompanied by a young friend named Julia, whose desire to receive the crown of martyrdom equalled her own. Both hastened to Emerita,—Julia sometimes ran before Eulalia; but the latter said to her with prophetic inspiration: “Run as fast as you may, my hands will bear the palm of the martyrs before yours.” As soon as they arrived in the town they presented themselves to Dacian, or as others write, to Calphurnius, and courageously declared that they were Christians, and would not worship the heathen gods. The governor, an implacable enemy of the Christians, who had already, on several occasions, exercised his tyranny over them, was furious at this voluntary confession; and after having tried, by flattery, to persuade the two maidens to forsake Christ, he began to torture them in various ways. The Roman Martyrology records that St. Eulalia suffered many terrible tortures. She was stretched upon the rack, torn with iron hooks, and finally entirely consumed by torches placed beside her. Julia, her faithful companion, soon after achieved her martyrdom by being beheaded, and thus the prophecy of St. Eulalia was fulfilled. St. Prudentius, who has related the martyrdom of St. Eulalia in verse, records, among other things, that this brave Christian heroine spat in the face of the tyrant when he would have persuaded her to sacrifice to the false gods, and that she thrust the idols and the censer away with her feet. During her torture, she addressed herself to Christ, the Lord, crying: “Now, my Saviour, Jesus Christ, I resemble Thee more than ever, as Thy suffering is written on my body with the bloody letters of my wounds.” According to St. Prudentius, the last torture consisted in savagely burning her wounded body with torches. The fire caught her hair, which was hanging over her shoulders, and blazed in her face. Eager to die, Eulalia opened her mouth and was suffocated by swallowing the flames. St. Prudentius relates of this Saint, in conclusion, the same that was told of St. Eulalia, of Barcelona, viz.: that her soul was seen ascending to heaven in the form of a dove. God wished to recompense equal fortitude in this world with equal honors.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Who is not astounded at the Christian heroism of these two holy Martyrs especially when their tender age is considered! Both seek martyrdom; both desire to suffer and die for Christ's sake. What do you do! I do not say that you are required to seek torture or other suffering, but your God demands, that when he sends you affliction, you shall not endeavor to free yourself from it by offending Him for whose honor you ought to be ready to suffer everything. This is done when one in sickness, or other misfortune, applies for relief to superstitious or other inadmissible means. In such circumstances show that you love God more than your health; and that you are ready to suffer anything rather than to offend God. If you, however, do the contrary, and try to regain health by superstitious means, you act as though you were seeking health from Satan himself! How great is such wickedness! "If in sickness you abandon God, and fly for relief to Satan," says St. Chrysostom, "how can you expect forgiveness for such a crime? How will you appease God again? Truly it is a crime which cannot be excused, and which deserves no forgiveness." How zealous, therefore, must your repentance be, for God to accept of it!

II. Both virgins confess openly that they are Christians; both rejoice to resemble Christ in their sufferings. By this resemblance they have proved that they were true Christians, for such must endeavor to

follow and resemble Christ, if not in the same manner as these two martyrs, yet otherwise, as for instance, by imitating His Virtues, Patience, Humility, Obedience, Gentleness, etc. Have you ever thought of this duty? Ponder well on it in future, and choose from these virtues, one or more in which you will endeavor to imitate Christ. "Learn," says St. Laurentius Justinianus, "the humility that Christ taught by His example and words:—Learn the obedience, which He proved to His father. Learn the other virtues. Follow Christ, that you may one day go to Him." "If we are not followers of Christ, we are wrongly called Christians," says St. Leo. "The Christians," says St. Bernard, "have received their name from Christ. It is, therefore, necessary that, as they have inherited His name, they also follow Him in His sanctity." Therefore, obey the exhortation of St. Bonaventure, who says, "Contemplate frequently the life of Christ, how humble He was among men, how kind to His disciples, how temperate in eating and drinking, how benevolent to the poor. He despised none, not even the lepers. He flattered not the rich. Think how retiring He was, how patient under degradation and wrong, how gentle in His replies, how modest and chaste in all His words and actions. In all you do, let your eyes constantly rest upon the example of Christ, that you may be encouraged to love and follow Him."

THIRTEENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. CATHERINE DE RICCI, PRIORESS.

Pope Benedict XIV., in 1746, canonized Catherine de Ricci, celebrated not only on account of her many virtues, but also for the many great gifts and miracles with which God had honored her. She was a daughter of the noble house of Ricci, and was born at Florence in 1522. Already in her earliest childhood, God had bestowed upon her fervent piety and great inclination for devotional exercises, which so filled her heart with peace and joy as to leave in it no room for worldly pleasures. Educated in a convent, she early tasted the sweetness of a religious life, and became so deeply attached to it that her affections could not be turned from it. Her father desired to marry her to a rich and noble youth, and used every argument in his power to induce her to yield to his wishes. She, however, assured him that she had already chosen a Bridegroom, to whom she could not become unfaithful, and succeeded at length in persuading him to abandon his designs, and to permit her to take the veil in the Dominican Convent at Prato, in Tuscany. St. Catherine's joy at entering on a religious life was fully equalled by her zeal to lead that life holily; and the bull of her canonization assures us that as novice she lived an angelic life, evinced the greatest horror for everything that might in the least stain her soul, and that she was a most beautiful example of every virtue. It was edifying for every one to see how so noble a maiden performed willingly and cheerfully the most humble offices, and at the same time was never separated from her God. She had hardly attained her twenty-fifth year when, much against her will, she was appointed Prioress of the convent, the duties of which office she administered with great wisdom and to the satisfaction of those under her charge, until the end of her life. She instructed her religious much more by her example than by her precepts, and thus led them upon the path of sanctity. There was no virtue in which she did not shine before them like a brilliant light, while she chose the crucified Christ as her perfect model for imitation. He was the only object of all her affection, and she bore towards Him the most tender devotion. As often as she looked upon His image, her frequent custom every day, sighs would escape her, and she would commend herself to His care with the most fervent prayers. The mysteries of the Life, Passion, and Death of Christ were the subject of her daily medi-

tation, which filled her heart with such heavenly love that she desired nothing more ardently than to suffer for the sake of her Lord, and to endure the same pains as our Saviour suffered in His holy body at the time of His Passion. Her desire was partly fulfilled in a most miraculous manner. From the period when she was twenty-two years old, every Thursday evening, as soon as she began to contemplate the Passion of Christ, she was transported out of herself, and remained in this rapture until the following day. During this time the Saviour's suffering passed before her eyes, and she herself felt some portion of the pain He once endured. Besides this, Heaven sent her many tedious and painful maladies, all of which, however, could not satisfy her desire to suffer for the sake of Christ. She derived strength and comfort in her most severe sickness by looking on her crucified Saviour, and by partaking of the Holy Sacrament, to which she was most fervently devoted. Often, after she had received the Holy Communion, a heavenly light was seen emanating from her; she was also raised high into the air, which is a proof of the ardent love that was burning deep in her heart. She endeavored to inspire those in her charge with an equal devotion to the Holy Sacrament and to the life and sufferings of Christ, and ever evinced a motherly care for their temporal as well as their spiritual welfare. If one of them was sick, she did not leave her side, showing her all possible kindness, and nursing both body and soul. Only to her own body did she allow nothing that could give it either comfort or joy, and, by wearing coarse, rough garments, by enduring heat and cold, by flagellation, watching, and fasting, she treated it as if it had been her worst enemy. For forty-eight years she gave herself no other nourishment than bread and water, and barely three hours' sleep at night. Such austerity deserved the more commendation as the saintly virgin, having never been guilty of any great sin, had nothing to atone for, but bore it out of love to her crucified God, and to become like Him by the exercise of constant mortification and patience. When we consider all this, and much more, which is contained in a circumstantial biography of St. Catherine, we cannot be surprised that God overwhelmed this zealous and faithful handmaid with grace, and honored her in the eyes of the whole world. He bestowed upon her the gifts of foretelling future events, seeing distant and hidden things, and revealing them for the benefit of others, giving instantaneous health to many who were sick, and miraculously multiplying food to assist the needy. The Blessed Virgin once appeared to her with her heavenly child, offering it to her embrace. Our Saviour Himself often appeared to her, speaking most kindly. At one time He im-

pressed the sign of the five holy wounds in her hands, feet, and side, and placed a crown of thorns on her head; at another, as she prayed most fervently before the crucifix, He loosened His arms from the cross and embraced her tenderly. One day, as He appeared to her, He placed a ring upon her finger as a token of His union with her. Many other such graces did St. Catherine receive; nevertheless, though esteeming them highly, she was not proud thereof, but humbled herself more deeply before God and men, and even attempted to conceal them. When informed that one of her nuns had written down all her praiseworthy deeds, she asked for the manuscript and burned it. But, notwithstanding this, she could not prevent the fame of her sanctity, and the miracles God had worked by her, from spreading abroad everywhere. Almost numberless were the persons, many being ecclesiastics of high standing, as well as people of rank, who came to the holy virgin, either to ask advice in divers affairs, or to receive, through her intercession, some particular grace of God. Catherine found this so painful that she prayed God not to honor her further by such signal marks of favor, or to keep them concealed from the eyes of the world. Heaven granted her prayer, and even permitted that many should look upon the sanctity of his handmaiden as hypocrisy; and she was therefore abused and slandered. In this, as in every other cause for tribulation, the Saint manifested most invincible patience. Those most able to judge of her virtue had, meanwhile, after a careful observation of her life, expressed the highest admiration for her sanctity, and have given the most incontestible evidence in proof of it. The fact should not be overlooked that St. Philip Neri, who, at that time, lived a most holy life at Rome, so highly esteemed Catherine that, writing to her, he asked for her friendship, and afterwards maintained it by frequently corresponding with her. One day, at Rome, while in an ecstasy, he beheld her before him and conversed with her a considerable time, through the grace of God. At length Christ was pleased to call His beloved bride to the heavenly wedding. The first messenger that reached her was a painful sickness. After having devoutly received the Holy Sacraments, the Saint was absorbed in the contemplation of the Saviour. She kept the Crucifix constantly in her hands, and kissed it repeatedly with fervent devotion. She desired to die upon the cross with Christ, stretched out her arms, called her Saviour, and so died—her body upon the bed, but her soul upon the cross of the Son of God. The religious who were present when she departed, distinctly heard heavenly harmonies, and St. Mary Magdelene of Pazzi, who then lived at Florence, saw in a vision how St. Catherine, glorified,

and accompanied by a host of angels, entered the heavenly Jerusalem. This took place on the 11th day of February, in the year 1589. Many miracles which were wrought after the death of St. Catherine, proclaimed to the whole Christian world how powerful was her intercession at the throne of the Almighty.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Catherine entertains the most tender devotion to the crucified Christ. She desires to suffer out of love to Him. In her pain she cheers herself by gazing at the crucifix, and she devoutly embraces it in the hour of death. You do not deserve the name of Christian if your heart does not cherish a peculiar devotion to the Passion of our Lord. If you have not the courage to ask permission to suffer from the love you bear your Saviour, receive at least with patience the cross that heaven sends you. Gaze often upon the crucifix, and, by so doing, arm yourself with fortitude. Be not one of those of whom Didacus Stella says: "Many do not think of the Passion of Christ until they see their own death before them. Then they grasp the Crucifix, on which they have not bestowed one thought during their past life." So long as they were well, a crucifix was seldom or never in their hands, but frequently cards, dice, immoral books, pictures, etc. To kiss a crucifix they were ashamed in the presence of others, but to carry an animal, a disgusting dog, in their arms, or—oh, shame!—to kiss it in the presence of others, they have not hesitated! Death comes, the crucifix is demanded, kissed, and pressed to the heart. But is it not to be apprehended that the mere sight of the crucifix reproaches the dying one with his past miserable conduct, and causes him much more fear and anguish than trust

and hope? If you wish that to gaze upon the crucified Lord shall one day be a comfort to you, so that you may die peacefully in His arms, think of Him frequently now while you are living. Take the crucifix in your hands often, kiss it with devotion, and pray your Saviour to give you the grace fervently to love Him, so that at last you may die in His favor.

II. St. Catherine treats her body as if it were her bitterest enemy. She allows it no comfort, no enjoyment, gives it no food but bread and water, grants it only three hours' sleep, torments it with scourges, hair garments, heat and cold. You continually pamper your body, as if you thought it your best friend. You even permit it sinful pleasures. You give it forbidden food on days of fast and abstinence. You let it sleep, and be idle as long and as much as it chooses. You never think of restraining it. You behave towards it as if its welfare were the end and aim of your being. And, in spite of all this, you hope to go to the same heaven which St. Catherine, after such constant mortification of her body, entered! Do you really suppose this is a reasonable hope? St. Augustine answers, "No!" He, as well as other holy Fathers, teaches that whoever would be counted among the Saints in heaven, must endeavor to follow their example upon earth. How can you follow St. Catherine? At least allow your body no sinful enjoyments; abstain from food when

forbidden at certain periods ; waste not too much of your time in sleep ; deprive yourself sometimes even of admissible pleasures ; mortify your body in some way or other, deferring to the advice of your confessor. "If we desire to join the Saints,"

says St. Augustine, "we must imitate them." And, again : "It is inconceivable to me how we can expect to partake of the joys of the Saints in heaven, if we do not even endeavor to imitate them in little things."

FOURTEENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. VALENTINE, BISHOP AND MARTYR, AND ST. VALENTINE, PRIEST, AND MARTYR.

Two holy martyrs are honored to day under the name of Valentine. The former was Bishop of Interamna, the other a priest at Rome.

The holy Bishop Valentine lived during the reign of the apostate Emperor Julian. As at that period the Christians were mercilessly persecuted, the Bishop was untiring in strengthening those under him in the true faith, and in encouraging them to look unshrinkingly forward to martyrdom. Towards the poor he was so benevolent that he even gave the clothes from his body. Once, on a cold winter's day, he met a half-naked beggar, and taking off one of his garments he gave it to him. Soon after, however, an angel appeared to him, and, returning the garment, said, that he had given it to Christ Himself, who, to prove him, had taken the form of a beggar. He further told him that the Lord would recompense him with many graces for his benevolence. Among these graces, was the gift of curing several diseases, particularly epilepsy. Besides others, he restored to health, in one instant, after a short prayer, the brother of Governor Fontæus, whom this disease had made crooked and lame, and, by so doing, converted him to the true faith. This Fontæus came, when in Rome, to a nobleman named Crato, who instructed young people in Latin and Greek. He was, however, still a heathen, and had very often implored his idols to restore his son, who, like the brother of Fontæus, was deformed by the effects of epilepsy. Fontæus related to him how his brother had been cured by Bishop Valentine of a similar disease. Crato immediately sent a message to Valentine, humbly requesting him to come to Rome. The Bishop came, and promised to restore his son to perfect health, if Crato and his family would become

Christians. Crato replied: "What you desire shall be done as soon as my son is cured." Valentine caused the son to be brought, and, locking himself up in a room with him, he began to pray, and continued in prayer until midnight. During the Saint's prayer, the deformed boy was entirely restored. Crato joyfully called his family together, and they were all instructed and baptized in the Christian faith by the Bishop. Several of Crato's pupils followed his example, among whom was Abundius, a son of the Roman governor, Placidus. When Placidus heard this, he had Valentine brought before him, and asked by what means he had cured Crato's son? "By none other than invoking Jesus Christ, the true God," answered the Bishop. The governor accused him, as was the custom of the heathen of that time, of having used witchcraft, and ordered him to be scourged from head to foot, then to be cast into prison, and left there to die of hunger and suffering. When, however, after a few days, he was informed that the Saint was apparently strengthened from on high, suffering neither from hunger nor pain, he caused him to be beheaded. Before the Saint ended his life, he thanked Heaven in a loud voice, for vouchsafing him the grace to die for the love of Christ; prayed for himself, his flock, and for all those who would ask his intercession in sickness, particularly in epilepsy. Since that time, God has graciously manifested, by many miracles, that he hears the prayer of his servant, for it is well known that innumerable persons have, through the Saint's intercession, been cured of that disease.



The holy Priest Valentine lived at the time of the Emperor Claudius. He was held in high estimation, both by the Christians and heathens, on account of his natural amiability, wisdom and virtue. Claudius himself desired to see him, and on his being brought into his presence, said to him: "Why do you refuse to be my friend, when I wish to become yours? Nothing in you displeases me, but that you confess a faith which is against our gods." Valentine replied: "O Emperor! if you knew the God I worship, you would consider yourself blessed to serve Him. He it is who has given you your life and your crown, and who alone can make you eternally happy." One of those present interrupted him, saying: "What think you, then, of Jupiter,—of Mercury?" "I think that they have been wicked men, as their lives show," answered the Priest; "and, therefore, they are unworthy to be called gods." "That is sacrilege!" cried many: "Valentine deserves to die!" Valentine begged the Em-

peror graciously to lend him his ear, only for a short space of time, that he might defend his words. Having received permission to speak, he placed the falsity of the heathen gods and the truth of the God of the Christians so clearly before their eyes, that the Emperor, prepossessed in his favor, said to those surrounding him: "I must confess this man speaketh with much reason, and nothing can be said to confute his teaching." Calphurnius, the Governor, who was also present, on hearing the Emperor speak thus, was filled with fear that he would embrace the Christian faith, and cried: "Valentine is a sorcerer, a blasphemer of the gods of the Empire! He must die, or an insurrection will break out among the people!" This speech alarmed the Emperor to such a degree that he gave up the holy Priest entirely into the hands of the Governor. Calphurnius immediately cast him into a dungeon, and gave orders to Judge Asterius to accuse him as an enemy of the gods, according to law. Asterius wished first to make an attempt to win over the Priest, who was so universally loved, from the Christian faith, but to the good fortune of the judge, the contrary took place. Valentine restored the sight of the daughter of Asterius, who had been blind for many years, and, in consequence, the judge and his whole family forsook their idolatry and were baptized. When this was reported to the Emperor, he admired the power of the God whom Valentine adored, and endeavored to set the Saint free, but again frightened by Calphurnius with an insurrection, he at length gave orders to behead him. Saint Valentine received his death sentence with great joy, and ended his life by a glorious martyrdom.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The Saintly Bishop Valentine restores the brother of Governor Fontæus, after a short prayer; but the son of Crato, only when he had supplicated Heaven during half of the night. God sometimes grants what we ask immediately, but not always. If he does not grant it immediately, you must not, on that account, discontinue to pray, but persevere with great confidence. For it is certain that if you persevere in your prayer in a proper manner, God will grant your request; should he, however, refuse it on account of its not contributing to your salvation, He will give you in its place something much more useful and necessary. Hence St. Augustine says, justly, "Whether we receive from God what we request or not, we must still persevere in our prayers, and not only thank Him when He grants our petition, but also when He refuses it: because, as we do not know so well what is best for us as God does, He in truth, confers a benefit upon us in not bestowing what we pray for, should this not further our salva-

tion." And again, "He will grant your request, if it is for your good. If, however, you would not derive any benefit from it, He will give you something more to your advantage." Take this truth to heart, and you will neither murmur against God when He refuses your request, nor cease praying when you receive no immediate answer.

II. The holy Priest Valentine desires to convert the heathen Emperor, and endeavors to convince him of the falsity of his idols and the truth of the Christian God. How is it with you? Have you a true knowledge of the God in whom you believe? Do you strive to obtain it? To prefer, and more frequently to go to the theatre than to listen to a sermon; to prefer, and more frequently to read, a silly, or perhaps a sinful book, than a book of devotion; to prefer, and more frequently to speak of worldly affairs, of voluptuousness, of games, of luxurious garments, of your neighbors' faults, or even of obscenities, than of God and holy subjects; these are not the means by which men are led to the most necessary knowledge of God. By listening to the Word of God, by reading books of devotion, by pious conversation, and by divine contemplation, we come to the knowledge of God. Do you make use of these means, or do you, perhaps, think that it is not so

necessary to attain a knowledge of God? What! You surely are aware that Christ said: "Now this is eternal life," that is the condition, the foundation, the first means to the eternal life: "that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (St. John, ch. xvii.). Where there is no knowledge of God, there is no true faith in Him, no true hope, no true love, no fear of God, no hope of salvation. St. Jerome said rightly: "The man who acknowledges not God, should rather be called an unreasonable animal than a man." Where the knowledge of God is wanting, there the greatest crimes find an easy entrance and prevail; according to the words of the Prophet, "There is no knowledge of God in the land. Cursing, and lying, and killing, and theft, and adultery have overflowed" (Osee, chapter iv.). What can follow such crimes but eternal ruin? Consequently, strive zealously, through the means above-mentioned, to attain a true knowledge of God. The better your comprehension of God, the more immovable will be your faith, the firmer your hope, the more ardent your love for Him, the more fervent your zeal to serve Him, the more carefully will you shun sin and endeavor to perform good actions. And this, believe me, is the only path that leads to salvation.

FIFTEENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. THEOPHILUS, THE PENITENT.

St. Theophilus, surnamed the Penitent, was Deacon and Administrator of the possessions of the Church at Adana, in Cilicia. His life was so virtuous that after the death of the Bishop, he

was unanimously elected his successor. The humble servant of God, however, represented his incapacity to hold so high an office with so much eloquence, that his wish was acceded to, and he was not compelled to accept the See. After some time, it happened that the new Bishop, deceived by false accusers, removed Theophilus from his office. He had shown great strength and firmness in declining the episcopal dignity, he now showed proportionate weakness at the loss of a far inferior office. The Evil One perceived this, and sought to entangle him still more. He pictured to him the wrong that had been done him, and the public shame which would accrue from it, in such glowing colors, that the deacon, formerly so pious, now tried to find ways and means to regain his former position. As, however, after long pondering, no means occurred to his mind, he went, in the darkness of night, to a Jew, who was a magician, and asked his aid. The Jew promised to assist him, if Theophilus would do all that was required of him. The unfortunate man showed himself willing to do everything, and engaged to return on the following night. The magician forthwith began his conjurations, and as Satan appeared with a long train, he laid the request of Theophilus before him. Satan's answer was, that he would surely fulfil all that was asked of him as soon as Theophilus had denied God and the Blessed Virgin. The unhappy Theophilus, totally blinded, scrupled not to consent to such dreadful stipulations. He denied God and the Blessed Virgin, and gave, on Satan's request, this denial to him in writing. The following day the Bishop sent for Theophilus, and—as Satan no further tempted Theophilus' enemies—declared openly that he had done him great wrong, asked his pardon, and re-installed him in his former office and promised him further favors. In this manner Theophilus obtained what he sought by such unjustifiable means. But his conscience soon began to goad him, and the recollection of what he had done tortured his mind so unceasingly day and night, that he walked about in fear and trembling. The magnitude of his crime allowed him scarcely any hope of obtaining pardon. At last God gave him the thought to implore the Blessed Virgin, whom he had formerly so loved and honored, to intercede for him with his offended God: because, though he had denied her no less than Christ, yet she still remained the mother of mercy, and the refuge of all sinners. Following this inspiration, Theophilus repaired to a chapel, dedicated to the Virgin Mother, and prostrating himself before her image, wept bitterly over the wrong he had committed, invoking the Mother of Divine Grace to look on him with merciful eyes, and obtain from his offended God forgiveness for his misdeeds

He prayed thus for forty days, maintaining a most rigorous fast all the time. At the expiration of this period the Blessed Virgin appeared to him, and representing the great sinfulness of the act he had been guilty of, reproved him, severely. Theophilus confessed that he had done great wrong and was unworthy to obtain pardon, but as the Lord showed Himself merciful towards the greatest sinners, he still hoped to be forgiven. "Hence," said he, "I, the most miserable of sinners, fly to thy motherly compassion and most humbly pray that thou wilt aid me with thy helping hand, and obtain forgiveness of my sins from thy beloved Son." The heavenly Mother required that he should revoke his denial and make anew his confession of Faith. The deeply repenting Theophilus obeyed, and promised most solemnly never again to become guilty of a similar wrong, either in thought or deed. After this the Mother of Mercy showed herself more graciously inclined to him, and promised to grant his request. Though this vision comforted Theophilus greatly, yet he continued to fast and to pray until he had obtained what he so fervently desired. He gazed often at the picture of the Blessed Virgin to see if no sign of the desired pardon was vouchsafed to him. At last the benignant Mother appeared to him again and said: "God, for my sake, receives your tears and prayers, but be careful that you remain constant to my Son until your latest breath." Theophilus, overjoyed, promised most earnestly unwavering faithfulness, adding, that he recognized Mary as his only refuge after God, and, therefore, felt that he owed her perpetual gratitude. Only one thing more troubled him, and this was the writing he had given to Satan; he therefore implored the Blessed Virgin to return it to him. Three days later he found it lying on his breast when he awoke after being overcome by sleep. His joy was now complete, and he returned humble thanks to the Queen of Heaven. The day following he went into the church where the Bishop, with the whole clergy, were present. He knelt before the Bishop, confessed his sins, accompanied with many tears, showed the writing he had given to Satan and related all that had occurred. The Bishop's horror at the crime of Theophilus was changed into irrepressible joy when he heard of the great graces that he had obtained by his penitence. He embraced him with tears in his eyes, absolved him from his sins, and during Mass gave him Holy Communion. The countenance of Theophilus, on receiving the Blessed Sacrament, shone with so heavenly a light, that the joy of all present was increased tenfold. After Mass the now happy Theophilus went to the Altar of Mary, again offering his thanks to her and still more to his God. Having prayed long he fell asleep, and on awaking found that he was sick. He regarded it

as a messenger of death, went home, made his will, leaving all he possessed to the poor, then returned to the church and there, as a true penitent, he gave up his soul. During the three days he had lived after his reconciliation with God, nothing had passed his lips but praises of the Almighty and of the blessed Virgin. Continuing them to his death, he will continue them through all eternity. His happy death took place in the year of our Lord 538. The history of this Saint is verified by so much historical evidence that to this day no one has dared to contest the facts.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Theophilus, whose course of life for many years had been most pious and exemplary, suddenly falls from the height of virtue into such a depth of wickedness, that he scruples not to deny Christ and His holy Mother, and to assign himself with his own hands to the devil! What a lamentable, what a dreadful fall! May it teach you, dear reader, to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, and never to trust too much to your own strength. You also, may, in like manner fall after having lived piously. But do not forget! Theophilus would not have fallen had he patiently borne his undeserved suffering. So much depends on our patience, even when we suffer innocently. Hugo of St. Victor, writes: "There are persons who, when they suffer wrongfully, are wont to say, 'If we had deserved it, we would bear the pain'; but because we have to suffer innocently, it seems so hard and unendurable." This is a foolish idea. You should feel ashamed and degraded when you deserve your suffering, but if you suffer innocently you should rejoice. Would you rather be a murderer than a Christian?" that is, would you prefer to suffer as a murderer, who deserves his punishment, by reason of his crimes, or like Christ, to suffer though innocent? St. Peter has long since admonished

all Christians: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a railer, or a coveter of other men's things. But if, as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name" (I. Peter, chap. iv.). He who suffers when innocent, suffers after the example of Christ. Perhaps an opportunity may be offered to you to suffer thus. Profit by it, though it should only be in small things, because by practice in small things we become able to do the same in things of more importance. "It is of no little consequence to conquer ourselves in trifling matters, as this teaches us to do the same in matters of greater moment," writes St. Basil.

II. Theophilus, after having become guilty of great sin, flies for refuge to the Blessed Virgin, as a Mother of Mercy. He endeavors to procure, through her intercession, grace and forgiveness; and she fails not to obtain it for him. Mary showed herself to him the true Mother of Mercy, the refuge of sinners. But of what sinners? From what has been narrated, the refuge of those sinners who flee from their sins, who repent and seek earnestly to convert themselves. Those who do not flee from their sins, who do not earnestly repent, must not imagine that Mary, on account of some prayers or other

devotional exercises they perform in her honor, will prove a refuge to them. Still less ought they to suppose that they are, therefore, not in danger of eternal death, but sure of eternal life. Whoever would find refuge and mercy in Mary, must at least earnestly resolve to better his sinful life and do penance for it. To effect this, he ought to imitate the example of St. Theophilus and implore the intercession of Mary. "When your sins frighten and overwhelm you," said St. Bernard, "go to the Mother of Mercy and lay bare the wounds that they have made. She will address her Son: and the Son will grant what the Mother, the Father what the Son asks." The example we have in the repentant Theophilus is one we can

never contemplate too much. Listen to what St. Bernard and also St. Peter Damian say. The words of the former are as follows: "Mary prevents the sinner from despair, gives him hope, nor forsakes him until she has reconciled him to his offended God. A well-known evidence of this benignity of Mary, we have in the life of St. Theophilus, whom God, through her intercession, received again into favor." The latter addresses Mary thus: "What will be refused to you, O Mary! to whom the rescue of Theophilus out of the jaws of hell was not denied? Nought is impossible to you, because you have had power to give back to despairing souls the hope of eternal life."

SIXTEENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. JULIANA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

Towards the close of the third century, there lived at Nicomedia an illustrious man named Africanus. He had an only daughter, who, on account of her wonderful beauty and other excellent gifts of nature, was admired by all the inhabitants of the town. Her name was Juliana. Africanus, a great enemy of the Christian faith, seized every occasion to persecute those who professed it; and he and his whole family were zealous in their worship of the heathen gods. Notwithstanding this, however, Juliana had an opportunity to become acquainted with the Christian faith, and after having been carefully, but secretly instructed in its teachings, she embraced it, and was baptized. After some time, as she learned to appreciate the priceless worth of chastity, she consecrated her virginity to God. Meanwhile, a young counsellor, Elusius, whom others call Evilasius, came to her parents, and asked their permission to be betrothed and married to their daughter. The parents, who knew nothing of Juliana's conversion, readily consented, and promised him their daughter without even ascertaining her wishes. The young senator, under the belief that all was thus arranged, went joy-

ously to Juliana, informed her of her parents' promise, and expected to receive her consent also. Juliana, fearing to reveal immediately the vow she had already made to God, had recourse to a subterfuge, and replied that she could not consent to his wishes until he had been raised to a higher—nay, even to the highest post of honor. Elusius did not despond, but by spending immense sums of money, he soon succeeded in being promoted by the Emperor to the high office of Governor of Nicomedia. As soon as this was accomplished, he went to Juliana and told her that he had fulfilled her demands and now expected her to perform her promise. Juliana said: "But I am a Christian, and you are a heathen. I cannot be united to one who is not a Christian. A handmaid of the true God cannot become the wife of a servant of the devil." Deeply agitated at so unexpected a reply, Elusius hastened to her father and complaining of Juliana's deceit, he threatened him with the displeasure of the Emperor, in case he should hesitate to force his daughter to keep her word. Africanus, who was ignorant of the fact that his daughter was a Christian, was not less indignant than Elusius: reproaching her, therefore, and representing the rank, honor and riches of Elusius, he endeavored to induce her to consent to the wishes of the latter. But he received the same answer as she had given to Elusius: "I am a Christian and will not marry Elusius, unless he adopts my faith." Her father, finding that his kindness effected nothing, first tried menaces and from these proceeded to the execution of cruelty. In his presence she was scourged over her whole body and afterwards thrown into a dungeon. When some time had elapsed he again asked her what she was determined to do, and finding her more inflexible than ever, he gave her—in obedience to an imperial order—into the hands of the Governor, that she might be proceeded with according to the laws. This Governor was Elusius. At first, having Juliana in his power, he tried to win her over by flattery, caresses and promises. He even pledged his word not to prevent her in the practice of the Christian faith. She might remain a Christian, and he, himself, would embrace her faith, were he not afraid of the Emperor's displeasure, being certain to lose his possessions, perhaps even his life. Hearing these words, Juliana answered him very wisely thus: "You fear the displeasure of a mortal Emperor and the loss of your temporal possessions and your mortal life—therefore you will not become a Christian! Ought not I, then, to fear much more, the displeasure of the Most High God, which most certainly I should incur if I should worship your gods or become the wife of a heathen! I shall not peril the loss of eternal life and happiness by

obeying you! No! My resolution will never change. I am a Christian, and as such will I live and die. Nor will I be married to one who is not Christian." This and such like words, fearfully enraged Elusius, and he gave orders that the saintly virgin should be tortured in various most cruel ways. They whipped her with ox sinews; hung her up by the hair until it was torn out by the roots, burned her with red-hot irons, and then, when her body was one great wound, cast her into a dungeon. During these terrible tortures, she showed herself undaunted, remaining steadfast in her determination, and only calling on God for strength. So, also, did she in the dungeon. God permitted Satan, in the figure of an angel of light, to appear to her, saying he had been sent by the Almighty to inform her that she had suffered enough to convince him of her constancy, and that she might now, without offending Him, consent to the wishes of Elusius, and heaven would aid and protect her. St. Juliana, mistrusting these words, prayed to God, who made the deceit of Satan plain to her, and, resisting his wiles, she remained true to her resolution rather to die than to forsake Christ or to marry a heathen. After this, appeared an angel of heaven, sent by God, who healed her wounds, and encouraged her to endure the tortures which yet awaited her. Elusius, when she was again brought before him, was astounded when he saw no wounds on the brave Christian heroine: nevertheless, he dared to assail her again with his wishes, but with no better success than before. The saintly virgin always returned him the same answer. Hence, nothing remained to be done but to vent his rage on her by a last and still more cruel torture. He ordered her to be burned alive, but as, after a short prayer of Juliana, the flames became extinguished, she was cast into boiling water. In this, also, she yet remained unharmed, praising God with a loud voice. The tyrant then commanded that she should be beheaded. Thus, at last did this Christian heroine finish her glorious battle, having conquered flattery and caresses, promises and threats, unheard-of tortures, a cruel father, a merciless tyrant and even Satan himself. And all this took place before she was eighteen, or according to others, even before she was fourteen years of age. Elusius soon after received the reward of his tyranny. He was wrecked on the ocean, cast by the waves upon an island, and there torn to pieces and devoured by wild beasts

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Juliana, by marrying Elusius, might have attained great wealth and honor. Elusius also promised that he would not prevent her from the practice of her faith, yet did she not consent. This every Catholic ought to consider who has the opportunity to become united to one not belonging to his faith. Among hundreds who promise not to interfere with the religious duties of Catholics, scarcely one is found who keeps his word. The proof of this is experienced every day. The wealth we seek through such unions leads to hell, because it is obtained by forbidden means; such marriages having been always disapproved of by the true Church. God himself forbade His chosen people to intermarry with heathens, on account of the danger they ran of losing their true faith. Among other commands will be found the following: Neither shalt thou make marriage with them. Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son; for she will turn away thy son from following Me, that he may rather serve strange gods." (Deuteronomy vii.) Several of such interdictions are to be found in Holy Writ. Experience shows that in our day the danger that Catholics run of losing their faith by intermarrying with such as belong not to their Church, is just as great, perhaps still greater, than it was when they intermarried with the heathen. How then can we think such a marriage—to speak in general—can take place without endangering salvation! Solomon, the wise king, was seduced to idolatry by idolatrous women. The same has happened to many others who married such, as the holy author, Esdras, assures us (II. Esdr. xiii.). And

who can number the Catholics, who, by marrying with such as belong not to their church, have forsaken the true faith, although they did not openly deny it, and hence have lost eternal happiness. Of the danger to which the children, born of such unions, are exposed, I shall speak hereafter. Whoever is, and would remain, a good Catholic, ought to avoid such marriages and also hinder others from contracting them.

II. Read once more, and ponder well, the answer, replete with heavenly wisdom, which St. Juliana gave to Elusius, who, fearing to lose the favor of the Emperor and his worldly possessions, would not embrace Christianity. Let it inspire you with horror for sin, by which you may incur the displeasure of God and lose your heavenly possessions. If you were certain that by committing a crime, you would lose all your earthly goods, together with the favor of those above you, would you commit this crime! Most assuredly not. Why, then, do you sin, being certain that you will, by so doing, lose the favor of God and eternal bliss! He that shall offend in one, shall lose many good things, says the Holy Ghost. (Eccles. ix.) Your losses are many, and great, and eternal! On the other hand, what is your gain by sin! "What have you lost," says St. Augustine, and on the contrary, what have you gained? What you have won, is called "Money." What you have lost, is called "Heaven." "Satan," writes St. Bernard, "gives you an apple and deprives you of Paradise." An apple, money, a sensual pleasure, a fleeting enjoyment, is all you gain by sin. Eternal happiness, Paradise, Heaven, is what

you lose. Compare your gain with your loss, and confess it to be the greatest folly, to sacrifice, wantonly and for all eternity, Heaven for money, Paradise for an apple, and heavenly possessions for a sensual pleasure, or fleeting enjoyment! Understand it well, for all eternity! What you gain by sin is of short duration, you can neither possess nor enjoy it long; but what you lose, you would have possessed and enjoyed for ever; but you have for ever

lost it. Judas earned thirty pieces of silver by his treachery. How long did he possess them? Not one day. What enjoyment did they give him? None at all. But he lost God's favor, his soul and salvation, and these indeed, for ever. How miserable the gain! How inestimable the loss! "Understand this well, ye who have forsaken your God, lest He one day suddenly remove you, and there will be none to save."

SEVENTEENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. CONSTANTIA, VIRGIN.

St. Constantia was a daughter of the celebrated Emperor, Constantine the Great. She was born and educated in heathenism, but was converted to the Christian faith by the following event: A terrible eruption had broken out all over her body, causing her great pain. The whole imperial court, but more particularly her father, had great sympathy for her, as she was not only very amiable, but also was endowed by nature with many shining qualities. Every means had been exhausted to alleviate her suffering, but without success. Meanwhile, Constantia had several times heard it related, that a great number of sick had sought and found health at the grave of St. Agnes. The desire to be cured of the eruption, influenced Constantia to go there and petition for her long-lost health. Although still a heathen, she arrived at the grave of the Saint full of confidence, and knelt upon the ground for some time, sighing and weeping, in prayer. At last, worn out by pain and excitement, slumber closed her eyes. In her sleep St. Agnes appeared to her and said: "Constantia! believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world. He can release you from your sins and restore your health." When, after some time, Constantia awoke, her pain, as well as the eruption, had vanished, and she felt that health had been restored to her. How fervently she gave thanks to the Almighty for so great a benefit may be readily imagined. She returned joyfully to the imperial palace, determined to become a Christian. This resolution was faithfully

kept, and, after being instructed in the true faith, Constantia, with many of her maids and relatives, was baptized. That she might still more please Jesus Christ she also consecrated her virginity to God. The life which she led, after having been baptized, was so exemplary, that it not only edified and strengthened the Christians, but also caused the conversion of many of the heathens. Not long after these events, Gallicanus, Commander-in-Chief of the imperial army, entered Rome, triumphantly and with great magnificence. He had won a decisive victory over the Persians, and had re-conquered Syria which they had torn from the empire. As a recompense for his eminent services, he asked of the Emperor the Governorship of Rome, and the hand of the princess Constantia, as his wife had died, leaving him two daughters. The Emperor granted his first request without hesitation, but told him that, with regard to the latter, he must confer with his daughter before he could decide. Constantia advised the Emperor to yield to the demand, but with the condition that Gallicanus must first bring back under the imperial sceptre Dacia and Thrace, which also had been taken from the empire. Meanwhile, she would give him, as a sign of her good faith, her two most dutiful servants, John and Paul, who should accompany him to the seat of war; but, in return, she expected that Gallicanus should leave his daughters under her care. Gallicanus cheerfully consented to these conditions; gave his two daughters to Constantia; and, accompanied by John and Paul, who were Christians, went away to the field of battle. Constantia now betook herself to earnest prayer, imploring God, not only to open the eyes of Gallicanus and his daughters, who were heathens, to the true faith, but also to guide his mind in such a manner, that he should no longer desire her hand. Constantia's prayer was kindly accepted by heaven. In a short time she converted the two maidens under her charge, and, after they had been baptized, they both made the vow of virginity; while Gallicanus, when the battle was raging, and he was in danger of losing it, being exhorted by John and Paul, called upon the God of the Christians, vowing to receive holy baptism, should he conquer the enemy. Assisted by God, he won the battle against all hope; and not only fulfilled his vow, but made another of perpetual celibacy. When the news of these events reached Constantia, she rejoiced exceedingly, and giving fervent thanks to God, she quietly continued her virtuous life. She passed the few remaining years of her earthly pilgrimage in great devotion, far removed from the court, in a small house, adjacent to a magnificent church, which the Emperor, at her request, had built in honor of St. Agnes. The two daugh-

ters of Gallicanus, whom her persuasions had converted, were her companions in retirement and devotion. The great Commander-in-Chief, who, through Constantia's prayers, had become a follower of Christ, would not be surpassed in virtue by his daughters. He resigned his high office, and, after having given the greater part of his wealth to the poor, and for building convents, he went with St. Hilarius to Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber, and devoted himself entirely to nursing the sick and giving hospitality to strangers. The Roman Martyrology records that, as these facts became known in the world, people came from far and near, to see how a man of such high rank washed the feet of the poor, served them at table, tenderly assisted the feeble, poured water over their hands, and performed for them many other acts of kindness. Finally, driven away by the apostate Julian, he went to Alexandria, at which place he was sentenced, by the Judge Rancianus, to die by the sword, on account of his confession of the Christian faith: and thus he ended his life by a glorious martyrdom. Equal happiness fell to the lot of Constantia's two faithful servants, John and Paul, who were both beheaded by order of the godless Julian, as recorded in the Roman Calendar of Saints, June 26th. St. Constantia, however, was called away from this earth to her Heavenly Spouse in the eightieth year of her life, much happier than if she had given her love to an earthly bridegroom, even if she, by so doing, had obtained the riches of the whole world.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

St. Constantia gives thanks to God, for being so miraculously cured of her eruption, and again, for the conversion of Gallicanus. The first was a corporal, the second a spiritual benefit. Thus she evinced her gratitude for corporal as well as spiritual benefits. What do you do? How many and great corporal benefits have you hitherto received from God? Have you duly thanked Him for them? O, how wrongly you have acted if you have neglected to do so! Atone for it in the future. One part of your prayers, both in the morning and at night, ought to be thanks for all benefits received. Not a day, not a night passes in which

you do not receive tokens of kindness from God. What is more just than that you should offer daily thanks for them? And lay it well to heart; these repeated thanksgivings for benefits received will move the Almighty to bestow other graces on you. "Gratitude is of great profit to man, as it induces God to bestow more gifts upon him." And again: "God does not demand gratitude from us as if he needed our praises, but that he may confer new benefits upon us." Thus speaks St. Chrysostom.

II. The life of St. Constantia, after her baptism, was edifying to all Christians, and caused the con-

version of many heathens, because it was in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel. How is your course of life regulated? Does it edify others, or scandalize them? Does it tend to convert heretics, or does it rather harden them still more? Does it lead them to respect the true Church? When a heretic sees that you, who call yourself a Catholic, do not hesitate to transgress the rules of your church—that you keep neither fast nor abstinence—that you esteem it of no consequence to go to confession or to Mass, or to listen to a sermon—that you rather associate with heretics than with those belonging to your own faith—that you sometimes even agree with them on questions of faith, or morals—that you speak contemptuously of the clergy, or the ceremonies of the Church, etc.,—he surely cannot be edified; and instead of becoming inspired with love for the true faith, he will be strengthened in his errors, and at last go with you to everlasting perdition. Woe be to you, if your uncatholic life should be the cause of it! At the throne of God it will call for vengeance against you. The same will be the result in regard to your Catholic neighbors. When they observe that you pray but seldom—that you hardly ever attend Mass on Sundays and festivals—that you, perhaps, hear a sermon only

once or twice during the year—that you do not receive the Holy Sacraments, etc.; can this edify them, or rouse them to become better? Oh! indeed not! However, you ought to know that it is your duty to give your fellow-creatures a good example, especially if you are of high position, or have others that look up to you. “So let your light shine before men,” says our Lord, “that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” (St. Matthew chap. v.) You must furthermore know, that those Catholics who live among heretics are especially obliged to live in strict accordance with their faith, in order that the latter may be edified and learn to love and esteem the true Church. Therefore St. Peter exhorted the newly converted Christians who lived among heretics to live piously: “But according to Him that hath called you, who is Holy: be ye also in all manner of conversation holy: because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy.” And again: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims to refrain from carnal desires which war against the soul. Having your conversation good among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by the good works which they shall behold in you, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

EIGHTEENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. SIMEON, BISHOP AND MARTYR; AND ST NICEPHORUS, MARTYR.

St. Simeon, whom the Catholic Church commemorates to-day in Holy Mass and the prayers of the day, was a son of Cleophas. His mother was named Mary, like the Blessed Virgin, and she was, according to the Gospel, also present at the Saviour's death.

There is no doubt that St. Simeon was one of Christ's followers; that he heard His teachings, and saw the many miracles which He wrought. When the apostles dispersed themselves over the whole world, Simeon remained in Jerusalem, zealously endeavoring, with the Apostle James, the first Bishop of the city, to convert the people. After St. James had suffered martyrdom at the hands of the Jews on account of his confessing Christ, St. Simeon was appointed his successor. He administered this sacred office with truly apostolic fervor, strengthening the Christians in their faith, and leading them in the path of virtue, while he unweariedly preached the crucified Christ to the heathen. On the arrival of the Romans, who besieged, conquered and devastated the city, he, obeying Christ, fled with all the Christians to a small town called Pella, on the other side of the river Jordan. As soon as the Roman legions, after demolishing the city, retired, Simeon returned with his flock. Under these circumstances, the holy Bishop's labor and anxiety for the temporal as well as spiritual welfare of those under his care, was very great. He, however, worked unceasingly, and had the satisfaction to see that the number of the faithful daily increased, and with it their devotion and virtue. To disturb all this, Satan sent several heretics, who, like wolves, forced their way into the fold of Christ, and attempted to seduce the faithful with their false, godless teachings. But St. Simeon, who watched over his flock day and night, refuted so energetically their false doctrines, and exposed the promulgators of them to so much ignominy, that they were forced to flee away. In the reign of the Emperor Trajan arose a terrible persecution of the Christians. Those who were of the race of King David were especially sought after, as it was feared that from among them a new Messiah might arise and cause another insurrection. Hence Jews, as well as Christians, who descended from Judah, and whose ancestor was David, were taken captive and beheaded. Amongst those first seized was St. Simeon. It was well known that he was not only a Christian, but even a Bishop, and that he was descended from the suspected race. Consequently, the Jews accused him before the Roman Governor, Atticus. At that period Simeon had already reached his 120th year. Atticus asked him if it was true that he was of the race of Judah, and a follower of Christ of Nazareth. Both questions the Saint answered fearlessly in the affirmative. The Governor assured him that in consideration of his advanced age, no harm should be done him, but that he should be loaded with presents if he would only renounce Christ and sacrifice to the gods of the Empire. The venerable man manifested the greatest horror that any one should dare to make such a request,

and said: "No, never, in all eternity, will I renounce Christ, nor sacrifice to idols. Your gods have been wicked people, who now burn in hell! Jesus Christ alone is the true God." This, and much more, Simeon said with so much true dignity that most of those present seemed to be deeply touched. To keep down this emotion, Atticus ordered that the holy man should be most severely scourged. The order was immediately executed, and the blood of the Saint soon streamed upon the ground. But he stood immovable, giving no sign of despondency but of deep inward joy. The following day they tortured him again in various most barbarous ways, but he evinced the same fortitude, and even joy. Atticus, as well as all others who witnessed it, could not comprehend how a man of his years had strength to endure torments, under which the most powerful hero would have succumbed. But God, who had already given the heathen many examples of Christian heroism, in tender boys and maidens, now showed what, with His grace, an feeble old man could endure, for the glory of the Christian faith. The Governor, desirous to make an end of the scene, sentenced Simeon to be crucified, saying, that as he ceased not to preach Christ, he should die the same ignominious death as Christ. But no kind of death could have been more welcome to this valiant confessor of Christ. Having prayed, he put off his garment, laid himself upon the cross which was in readiness for him, and offered his hands and feet to be nailed. They fastened him upon the cross, and then raised it. No possible suffering could have been greater, yet was it excelled by his patience. He proclaimed, once more, from the cross, with a loud voice, that Christ is the true God and the Saviour of the world. Imitating Him, he prayed for his executioners, commended his soul into the hands of the Almighty, and ended his holy life by a death so glorious, and so much resembling that of Christ, that the contemplation of it strengthened the Christians in their faith, and was the means of converting many of the heathens to the knowledge of the true God.



A not less glorious, though much less cruel, martyrdom, was suffered by the holy martyr of Christ, Nicephorus, who lived during the reign of the two Emperors, Valerian and Galienus, in the city of Antioch. He belonged to the laity, but led a very edifying life. At this period there lived at Antioch a Priest by the name of Sapritius, who enjoyed a most excellent reputation, and who, for many years, had been so closely united in friendship with Nicephorus, that both seemed to possess one heart, one

soul. But suddenly they were inflamed with such intense hatred towards each other that they not only avoided meeting, but would not even hear of each other. Nicephorus, however, soon came to the knowledge of his fault, and having overcome his hatred, endeavored to reconcile himself with Sapritius. With this intention, he sent some intimate friends to him, humbly asking his pardon and the restoration of their former friendship. But the Priest, Sapritius, not worthy of the sacred title, would neither hear of forgiveness nor reconciliation. Soon after, Nicephorus sent some others to persuade him, but their efforts met with no better success. At length, resolving to speak for himself, he proceeded to his house, and kneeling before him, most humbly begged his forgiveness. But neither did this humiliation soften the callous heart of Sapritius. Hatred had taken such entire possession of it that neither prayers nor tears would eradicate it. Meanwhile there arose in Antioch a terrible persecution of the Christians. Many were cast into prison and most cruelly tortured on account of their faith. Among these was Sapritius. The Governor, an implacable enemy of the Christians, had him brought before him, and asked him if it was true that he was a Christian. Sapritius courageously confessed his faith, and refused, with Christian fidelity, to sacrifice to the false gods. He was stretched upon the rack, scourged and cruelly tortured, but he still remained faithful to Christ, and said to the Judges: "My body is in your hands, but you possess no power over my soul." The judge, seeing he could effect nothing with Sapritius, gave orders that he should be beheaded. No sooner had the tidings of this sentence reached the ears of Nicephorus, than he hastened to the street that led to the place of execution. When he saw Sapritius, he sank on his knees before him, imploring his pardon. Being refused, he still followed him, repeating his self-humiliation; but Sapritius was yet obstinate, and without even giving an answer, he turned his back and pursued his way. The pious Nicephorus took this sorely to heart, for he knew that though Sapritius might give his life for his faith, this would not, according to St. Paul, save his soul. "If I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

He went, therefore, to the place of execution, and pushing his way through the people, he came to Sapritius; and while he represented to him the favor he would doubtless obtain by dying for the sake of Christ, he also pictured to him the danger he incurred of being eternally lost, should he not extinguish all hatred in his heart. Then, sinking down before him, he exhorted him to listen to his prayer and forgive him his fault. Sapritius, more inflexible than iron or steel—how dreadful an obduracy!—re-

mained unmoved. But this hardness of heart at last caused his ruin. Admonished by the executioner to kneel down, that he might receive the fatal stroke, the unhappy man turned towards him, asking: "For what am I to die?" "Because you have refused to obey the imperial command to sacrifice to the gods," was the reply. "I will cheerfully do all that is required," said the miserable apostate. "I will obey and sacrifice to the gods." These words rejoiced the executioner, who sheathed his sword; while the pious Nicephorus, horrified at this unforeseen occurrence, went towards them, and most earnestly exhorted Sapritius to be courageous and not to become unfaithful to God, for whom he had already suffered so much. With these and other deeply-moving words, he tried to penetrate his heart, but all was in vain: Sapritius was not to be softened. He remained obdurate, and thus, by renouncing the true faith, went to his own destruction. At this moment a fervent desire awoke in the heart of Nicephorus, not only to atone for the sin by which Sapritius had offended God, but also to remove, in some measure, the scandal he had given to those present; he therefore cried aloud: "I am a Christian, and confess the faith of Jesus Christ, which this god-forsaken man, to save his temporal life, has so shamelessly renounced. I am ready to die in his place." As soon as the judge was informed of this, he gave orders that Nicephorus should be beheaded instead of Sapritius. Thus did this valiant confessor of Christ receive the crown of martyrdom, which Sapritius had so wantonly cast from him.

SPECIAL OBSERVATIONS.

Before I give you the usual lesson, dear reader, I beg to pause a moment after the occurrences just related, and consider the following points. First, Sapritius is neither moved by supplications nor by the near approach of death to forgive his enemy. This is the result of harboring anger and hatred, and therefore Holy Writ admonishes us "not to let the sun go down upon our wrath," which means that we, before night sets in, should become reconciled to our enemies, and banish all anger from our hearts. Secondly, Sapritius had suffered much for the true faith, and oth-

erwise had lived meritoriously, nevertheless he went to destruction because he refused to forgive his enemy. Flatter not yourself too much, because you do much good and abstain from much evil, while yet you remain a slave to some sin without endeavoring to free yourself from it. One single mortal sin may cause you eternal misery. Thirdly, Sapritius, a Priest, forsakes his faith and goes to everlasting punishment: Nicephorus, a man of the world, confesses it undauntedly, dies a martyr, and goes to everlasting bliss! How impenetrable is the judgment of God! Priesthood

—the clerical station—does not insure salvation, does not of itself endow any one with holiness. In it we can sin and be eternally lost, as we can in any other station of life, though when invested with priestly functions, we possess more means and better opportunities to lead a pious life and prepare our souls for heaven. But no man of the world can lay it to his station in life, should he lose everlasting happiness. Enough ways and means are left to him to serve God, and to work out his salvation. The only obligation is to use them well. Finally, Nicephorus is not corrupted by the bad example of Sapritius, but, eager to atone for the sin by which the latter had offended God, and also to

repair, in some degree the scandal he had given, both to Christians and heathen, he boldly confesses the true Faith, and in its defence, gives his own life. It may happen that among so large a number of ecclesiastics you find some whose lives are not quite so well regulated as they ought to be. Let it not disturb you; but observe the good example which the god-fearing give you and endeavor to imitate it. Not a Judas, but a St. Andrew, and other apostles, must serve you as models. Take care, also, that you do not, on account of one Judas, despise all the other apostles—on account of one unworthy Priest, despise not the whole Priesthood—this would be against all reason and justice

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I. St. Simeon was crucified, St. Nicephorus was beheaded for confessing the Christian faith. Although you have no occasion to be crucified or beheaded for the same cause, you have still ample opportunities to crucify yourself and your flesh: and this you must do if you earnestly desire to be saved. St. Paul says: "That those that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences. (Galat. chap. v. This crucifixion consists, according to the teachings of St. Anselm, in zealously practising mortifications: such as fasting, and by them chastising the body; or, according to St. Augustine, in suppressing evil inclinations and temptations, and strenuously resisting them. According to other holy Fathers, this crucifixion consists in deadening the bodily senses, and in using them in no manner that will offend God. If you, therefore, would crucify yourself, as it is your duty to do, at least keep the fasts, even

though it prove a hard task for the body. Keep your eyes, your ears, your tongue, your hands, etc., in subjection. Turn your eyes from dangerous objects. Close your ears to unchaste, slanderous, or otherwise sinful speeches. Let your tongue say nothing that may offend God. Pollute not your lips with forbidden kisses. Stretch not out your hands with evil intentions. Let not your feet carry you to places where you run into danger of offending God. In a word, do not use one limb of your body in any way to offend the Almighty, even though your corrupt and wickedly inclined nature incites you to it. Resist your anger, your pride, your ambition and all other sinful inclinations. In this manner you crucify your flesh and yourself, and thus, not only do you belong to Christ the Lord, but also you confess your faith in Him by this kind of martyrdom.

II. St. Simeon reaches the age

of 120 years, and then ends his long, holy life by a glorious and holy death. Will you become as old? Will you end your life with a happy death? This second question St. Augustine answers, with the assurance that your death will not be unhappy if your life is spent piously. He says: "He who has lived piously cannot die miserably or unhappily." These same words the holy teacher repeats more than once in the same sermon. "It is quite sure," says he, "that he who has lived in piety cannot die in misery." Returning to the first question, I hardly believe that you promise yourself to become as old as St. Simeon: and yet you hope to live long. Upon what do you build this hope? Upon your youth, your strength, or your health? Oh! how weak a foundation! Hundreds and hundreds have existed who were

as young, as strong and as healthy as you, and yet they died early. The rich man in the Gospel hoped yet to live many years, but the same night his soul was required of him. Hope deceived him. Take heed that you do not thus deceive yourself. The surest way is this: never defer, in the hope of a long life, that which you need to enable you to die happily and to attain everlasting happiness, as otherwise, you are in danger of everlasting destruction. Meditate often upon the words of the pious Thomas à Kempis: "O fool! How can you believe that you will live long, when you are not sure of one single day? How many who thought that they would live long, have been deceived, and have died suddenly! Do now what is needful to be done, for you know not how soon the hour of your death may come."

NINETEENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. MARTINIAN, HERMIT; AND ST. CONRAD, HERMIT.

A melancholy example of human weakness, but at the same time, a beautiful example of true penitence, is given us, in the life of the holy hermit Martinian. He was born at Cæsarea, in Palestine. In early youth he went into retirement on a high mountain, not far from the city. There he passed twenty-five years in watching, praying, fasting and other devout exercises. A crowd of people was ever streaming towards his dwelling, as God had granted him the gift of healing many diseases, as well as the power to free those who were possessed by the devil. Everywhere was he praised as a holy man. But unfortunately, one day, while his virtues were being praised, Zoe, an insolent, unchaste woman, said, "Why talk you so much of the holiness of this man? I will wager all I possess that I will seduce him in one night." She then disguised herself as a pilgrim, and proceeded at nightfall to the hut of Martinian. She called to him

with a dolorous voice saying: Oh! man of God, have pity on me. Permit me to come in, for fear the wild beasts should devour me. I have lost my way, and do not know where to go." The hermit raised his hands on high, called on God for aid, and after having been supplicated for a long time, he allowed the pretended pilgrim to enter the hut. He gave her something to eat, went deeper into the cave, to be away from her, and passed the night in prayer. Meanwhile, Zoe put on her most elegant garments, which she had carried in a bag, and adorned herself magnificently. When Martinian, with the first light of morning, returned, he found that instead of a pilgrim, to whom, in his compassion, he had given shelter, it was a wantonly dressed woman. Confounded with astonishment, he asked who she was, and why she had come to him? Zoe confessed her intentions and attempted to seduce, with flattery and caresses, the hermit, who, until now had led so holy a life. Martinian, enticed by the wicked woman, resolved to comply with her proposal, and instead of driving her out of his cell, he went out to see if, perhaps, there might be people on the road coming to see him. At the moment he was gazing about, God looked pityingly down on him, touched his heart, and said, earnestly, to his inmost soul; "What hast thou done, Martinian, and what wilt thou yet commit?" It needed no more. Repentance and horror of the sin he was about to commit, overwhelmed him to such a degree, that he sank, half fainting to the ground. As soon as he had somewhat composed himself, he gathered together some dry brushwood, made a fire, jumped with both feet into it, and thus spoke to himself; "Martinian, if you can endure this fire, sin. But, if you cannot endure this temporal fire, how will you bear the eternal flames, which you deserve through sin?" He then called to the woman, saying: "Now, come, if you will sin." Zoe, terrified at this spectacle, was deeply moved. She tore off her magnificent garments and cast them into the fire with the rest of her ornaments, begged the penitent hermit to forgive her, and desired to know what she should do to receive from God remission of her sins, as she had resolved to reform. Martinian advised her to go into a convent, at Bethlehem, and remain there until the end of her days in severe penance. She obeyed, went there, and being received, lived like a true penitent, ending her life with the reputation of a Saint. Martinian, as soon as his wounds were healed, confessed his sin, and then leaving his hut, crossed the sea and lived for six years upon a high mountain, on an island, observing a strictly penitential life. When, however, one day, a ship was wrecked, and a woman, having saved herself on a plank, landed on the island where the saint lived, and came to him, asking shelter, he

resigned his hut to her and fled away with the words: "Fire and straw are not safe together." Going to the sea, he made the sign of the cross upon it, and then raising his eyes towards heaven, cried: "My Lord and my God! Thou, who commandest the wind and the waves, turn Thine eyes piteously upon me and let me not perish. Behold, O Lord! I cast myself into the sea, willing rather to die than to remain in danger of sin." He then threw himself into the sea, and Providence, pleased with his determination to shun further danger, brought him safely to land. Returning thanks to Almighty God for so miraculous a protection, he resolved to make his domicile in no particular place, but to wander from one to another. This resolution he carried into execution. He went from city to city, visited the most celebrated churches and resting-places of departed saints, lived upon alms, exercised himself constantly in praying and fasting, and slept, sometimes in the wood, or in the fields, or on a mountain, or in an humble hut, just as his travels led him. After the lapse of two years, he came to Athens, went into a Church, and remained for a long time in prayer. At length, feeling that suddenly all his strength had forsaken him, he desired to receive the sacraments. Having done so with great devotion, he survived but a short while, ending his long pilgrimage with a happy death, in the year of our Lord 400. His last words were those which Christ had uttered: "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit."



To the life of the holy, penitential hermit, Martinian, I will add that of another holy hermit. This was Conrad, a knight of Placentia. After spending his early youth irreproachably, in the course of time he married, in accordance with the wishes of his parents, a noble, virtuous maiden, named Euphrosyna, with whom he led a Christian life. Only one thing did Euphrosyna blame in her husband, and this was his too great passion for the chase; but God disgusted him with the pleasure he found in it by the following incident. A deer, which Conrad hunted, crept into a hedge so far that they could not reach it. To force it to leave its hiding-place, Conrad set the dry hedge on fire on one side. A violent wind, however, caused the flames to reach the trees, and the fire increased to such an extent that the greater part of the forest was consumed, to the serious damage of the proprietor. Conrad, meanwhile, hurried secretly from the forest, and returned to his castle. A poor man, who, at the time of the fire, was gathering brushwood, being found in the forest by the soldiers who had been sent there, was seized as an incendiary.

The pains he suffered on being tortured seemed to him less endurable than death; hence he said he had committed the deed, of which, in reality, he was innocent. He was sentenced to die, but as he was being led to the place of execution, he passed Conrad's dwelling, who ran out and confessed that he, and not the poor man, had inadvertently set fire to the forest, and offered to pay for the damage done, which he did without loss of time. The innocent man was consequently released, and Conrad, disgusted, by this occurrence, not only with the chase, but also with the pleasures, riches, and honors of the world, determined to leave all and retire into the desert. His pious wife consented to his plan, and went into a convent of St. Clare, where she led an exemplary life.

Conrad, attired as a pilgrim, went into the desert and resided some time with some pious hermits, in the exercise of a strictly penitential life, entering the third Order of the Franciscans. He afterwards went to Rome, and from thence to Sicily, not far from Palermo, where he made his dwelling-place, at first in the valley of Noto, and afterwards in a rude cave upon a high mountain. Here he continued in the exercise of austere penances until his death. Although the Evil One tempted him repeatedly, he was able to effect nothing; the servant of God valiantly combatted with him. One day Satan took the form of a messenger, and informed him that Euphrosyna had left the convent, and had returned home, demanding that he should return to her, his lawful wife. Conrad was startled on hearing this news, but, on addressing a short prayer to God, he was enabled to recognize who was concealed under the garb of the messenger, and, driving him away, he continued his penitential life with redoubled austerity. The fame of his holiness spread far and near, especially as it became known that God had given him power to foretell future events and to work miracles. Forty years had he thus passed since his conversion, in the strictest penance, when God revealed to him the day of his death. Going to the city of Noto, he devoutly received the Holy Sacraments, and, retiring to his cave of penance, soon after ended his holy life, in the 61st year of his life, and 1351 of the Christian Era. At the hour of his death all the bells in Hiblea and Noto, the two nearest cities, were rung, without being touched by a human hand. They went to seek the hermit, and found him in his cave, kneeling, with his clasped hands raised on high. He was dead. On being brought to his grave, the lame, the blind, the deaf, and the sick have been restored to health.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The sad episode in Martinian's life will teach you, first, how careful you should be in your intercourse with those of the opposite sex. Visiting them, unnecessary or long conversations, or promenading with them, etc., is never without danger. Thousands of sins have they caused, innumerable souls have they brought to destruction. Secondly, learn that we must resist at once those who tempt us to sin. Had Martinian immediately driven Zoe away, as soon as she had disclosed her wicked designs, or if he himself had fled, instead of listening and looking at her, he would not have sinned in his thoughts, and almost have fallen still deeper. The means which Martinian made use of to prevent himself from sinning, shows you how to act in the time of temptation, proceeding either from your own thoughts or from surrounding objects. Think, at such moments, of the eternal fire into which you are casting yourself, and ask your heart if you will have courage to bear it. "Which of you," says the Prophet Isaias, "can dwell with devouring fire? Which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isaias xxxiii.). Hold your hand close to the fire, or touch a burning candle with only one finger, and then think how you will feel in hell, when both your body and soul are in everlasting flames. I am certain that you will lose all desire to sin.

II. Our two saintly hermits give us a splendid example of penance. Martinian sinned only once with his desires. Of Conrad no fault is known but that he was inordinately fond of hunting; and yet both have

done penance until the end of their lives. In all probability you have offended God oftener and more heavily. But what has been your penance, and how long did it last? Both these holy penitents have not been satisfied with confessing their sins, but have mortified their bodies and repented and wept over their faults numberless times. Both have avoided the most remote occasions to do wrong. You continue to pamper your body, though it has done wrong so many times; and you have no desire to fast or to do other penances commanded you. You neither think of your former sins nor daily repent them, but fancy that you have done your duty when you have confessed them; and Heaven only knows if you did so in the right spirit. You abandon yourself again to the same danger, and voluntarily associate with them who have caused you to sin. Ah! this is no penance that can give you hope of eternal salvation. You must be much more in earnest. "We have offended God, brethren," says St. Thomas of Villanova; "we must therefore repent or burn eternally in hell. But, oh! how much easier is it to do a short penance than burn eternally in hell!" "True penance consists," according to the teaching of St. Gregory, "in earnestly weeping over our faults, and in not again being guilty of what we weep over." It also is a part of true penance, as I have already told you, to punish in our own body the sin we have been guilty of in misusing the same. You must resolve to do such penance. Either to do penance, or to burn eternally in hell. "Penance or hell." Consider it deeply.

TWENTIETH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. EUCHERIUS, BISHOP OF ORLEANS AND ST. BRIDGET.

St. Eucherius, the son of noble and pious parents, was born in Orleans. Before he saw the light, an angel announced to his mother that the child, to which she was about to give birth, was chosen of God to become Bishop of the city. The mother told this to her husband, and both praised God, resolving to neglect nothing to educate their son piously. This, however, needed very little trouble on their part, as the inclination to virtue seemed to be born with Eucherius, while, at the same time, God had gifted him so richly with talents, that, in the study of the liberal arts and sciences, he was always the first among his fellow-students. As his diligence was equal to his talent, he made, in comparatively a short space of time, much more progress in secular as well as in ecclesiastical science, than could be expected at his age. To advance more and more in virtue, he read daily in the Bible. Once, as he came to the words of the Apostle: "The form of this world passes away," God inspired his mind to recognize so fully the vanity of all earthly things, that he became disgusted with the world, and at once resolved to renounce it, and retire into a monastery, that he might be more certain to inherit the joys of heaven. In accordance with this resolution, he went into a monastery whose religious were called *Acœmetæ*, because they endeavored to vanquish sleep, so as to have more time to praise God. In this monastery he attained such sanctity, that, after the death of the Bishop of Orleans, he was unanimously elected his successor. As, however, they knew well, that Eucherius would decline to accede to the call, the clergy sent a deputation to the regent, Charles Martel, begging him to sanction their choice, and also to persuade Eucherius to accept the vacant See. Charles Martel, who had already often heard of the virtues of St. Eucherius, sent a messenger to the monastery where the Saint was, with orders, that, in case he should be unwilling to follow, he was to be brought to Orleans by force. The Saint shed many bitter tears, but was obliged to obey, and having been conducted to Orleans, he was consecrated Bishop. Installed in his high office, he was assiduous in the discharge of his duties. He insisted on ornamenting the churches and considered the perfect cleanliness of them as indispensable. Nor would he allow anything in them that was not in perfect harmony with the sacredness of the place. He admonished the

priests to live a spiritual life. He taught the people of the world, by exhortations and preaching, what to believe, to do, and to avoid, in order to gain eternal salvation. He visited almost all the churches and monasteries, and was not only indefatigable in reforming all abuses in them, but also in giving them wholesome ordinances. He gave the greatest part of his income to the poor, not only providing them with food but also with clothes and other necessities. When, however, occasion required it, he could be just as severe as he was kind, neither regarding rank nor title. Thus, he sharply reproved Charles Martel, who, under pretext of continuing the war against the Saracens, seized the revenues of the churches and distributed Bishoprics and other ecclesiastical benefices according to his own will and pleasure. He paid no attention to the ill feeling which this drew upon him, as he had performed his duty. Just as little heeded he the aspersions and persecution which a few dissatisfied minds set to work against him, neither did they deter him from doing what he considered for the honor of God, or for the salvation of those under his charge. His enemies ceased not, by divers false accusations, to misrepresent him to Charles Martel, who at last banished him to Cologne, even after the Saint had been for 15 years Bishop of Orleans, and had zealously discharged his duties. At Cologne was St. Eucherius, still more loved and honored, and, therefore, Charles Martel sent him farther into the territory of Liège. He, however, by his virtues and holiness, soon won the highest esteem of Duke Robert, who had received him in charge, and from him he obtained permission to say Mass in the Church of the holy Confessor Trudo. The Saint passed most of his time in prayers; preached frequently to the people; taught the ignorant; comforted the sad and desponding; roused sinners to repentance; incited the pious to constancy; in short, he did all that could be required of a zealous pastor. After six years of unhappiness, during which no one ever heard a word of complaint against Charles Martel or his other enemies, God sent him a severe sickness. Regarding it as a forerunner of death, he prepared himself carefully, and his countenance was resplendent with heavenly light, when his last hour came. Thus, with a heart overflowing with peace, the Saint departed from his earthly banishment to his heavenly home.



To the short sketch of the life of St. Eucherius we will add a few lines concerning the history of St. Bridget, although the festival of this Saint falls upon another day. She was born in Ire-

land. Her mother was a slave. The name of her father was Duplacus, in whose house her mother served. As soon as the wife of Duplacus became aware of her husband's infidelity, she drove the slave away. The latter bore the exile and consequent poverty with great patience, hoping that it might, in some degree, atone for a sin that had been committed much more from weakness than from wickedness. When her child was born, she gave it the name of Bridget, and reared it with great care. In the course of time, however, Duplacus took charge of it, and had it instructed in the Christian religion. Little Bridget showed great docility; loved retirement, and despised the faintest shadow of evil. Heaven had endowed her with extraordinary beauty, on account of which she had many suitors for her hand. Duplacus left the choice to herself, and she chose the most beautiful, the richest, and the noblest of all for her Bridegroom—Jesus Christ—to whom she consecrated her virginity. That she might henceforth be freed from the importunity of earthly lovers, she implored God to change the beauty of her face into such hideousness that nobody, in future, should desire to make her his wife. Heaven complied with a prayer so unusual; one eye of St. Bridget began to run, and at last dried out entirely. With this, all beauty departed, and nobody cared even to look at her. Her own father was so disgusted with her appearance that he advised her to enter a convent. This was exactly what she desired. While she was receiving the habit, and Bishop Machilla, a disciple of Saint Patrick, was placing the consecrated veil upon her head, he not only saw a column of fire above her, but, as she bent the knee before him, and touched with her hand, the long dried-up wood of the Altar, it began instantly to blossom, in token of her virginity. This is recorded in the Roman Martyrology. Life and sight returned to her withered eye, and with it, the former beauty of the spouse of Christ, as there was now no longer any danger that it would tempt others to sinful love. The life she led in the convent, until her death, was one of great sanctity. God bestowed upon her the power to see secret things, and miraculously to heal the blind, the crippled, lepers, and those suffering from other maladies. Among many other incidents of her life, the following are narrated: As she was one day seated at table with another virgin, she saw a horrible devil sitting beside her companion. She asked what he was doing there? The unclean spirit replied: "It is pleasant to me to be near this virgin, as I find rest and comfort in her idleness." Bridget drove the fiend away with the sign of the Holy Cross, and admonished the lazy virgin to reform. A wicked woman declared that the Bishop was the father of her illegitimate child. Bridget made the

sign of the cross on the woman's mouth, and she was unable to utter another word. She then made the sign of the cross on the little child, and asked: "Who is thy father?" It answered: "Not the Bishop, but that vulgar, licentious man standing yonder!" A noble lady brought her daughter, twelve years of age, who had been dumb since her birth, to Bridget. She took the child's hands, and asked: "Will you, out of love for Christ, remain a virgin?" The mother interposed: "The child cannot speak, neither can she understand the meaning of those words," said she: "I will answer for her—Yes." "This suffices not," said Bridget: "I shall not release the hand of your daughter until she has replied." The child, dumb until now, suddenly said these words, distinctly: "Your commands shall be obeyed!" And from that moment the child was enabled to speak. Many other similar incidents are to be found in the biography of this Saint, who, at length, in the year 518, or, as others say, in 521, was called by her heavenly bridegroom, after a happy death, to a happy eternity.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "The form of this world passes away." Meditation upon these words, disgusted Eucherius to such a degree with all earthly riches, honors and pleasures, that he determined to quit the world. Why do you so love the world and all that it contains? You do not consider the two lessons which the above words teach: namely, that the riches, honors and pleasures of this world contain nothing durable, nothing true; but are an empty form, a mere breath, a fleeting shadow; all passing quickly away. They do not remain. Therefore it was that Solomon exclaimed, after he had obtained all that he believed was required for earthly happiness: "I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun" (Eccles. chap. ii.). And shortly before this, he says: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity" (Eccles. chap. i.). The pious Thomas à Kempis says, "All is vanity, ex-

cept loving and serving God." It is vanity to seek perishable riches or to hope to receive them. It is vanity to seek temporal honors. It is vanity to wish for a long life, and not strive after a pious life. It is vanity to think only of this world, and not to make preparations for the next. It is vanity to cling to what is so unenduring, and not to hasten towards the path that leads to unfading joy. Hence, strive to wean your heart from earthly treasures, and turn it towards heaven. For it is certain, as has been said before, that the pleasures, riches and honors of this world, are only vanities. Therefore, I must ask with the Psalmist: "Oh, ye sons of men, why do ye love vanity and seek after lying?" (Psalm iv.). "Let us believe the wise Solomon," writes St. Chrysostom, "and strive after treasures which are not empty and perishable." If you will not believe Solomon, believe experience.

Where are those pleasures and enjoyments which you have tasted during the time of Carnival, or on other occasions? They have passed away and gone. And where, in a short space of time, will those riches be that you have amassed, rightly or wrongly? You will soon have to leave them; perhaps they will become the property of your worst enemy. Endeavor, then, according to the admonition of St. Chrysostom, to gain those joys, riches and honors which pass not away, but which remain eternally.

II. St. Bridget supplicated God to deprive her of the beauty of her face, that she might thereby more securely preserve her purity. Oh! how differently do the vain children of the world act! By clothing themselves in luxurious garments, and manifold arts, they seek to obtain that beauty which nature has denied them, that they may thereby please others and more surely fall. Be not you among the number of these foolish people, as you may bring yourself and others in danger, not only to commit many sins, but even of everlasting destruction. What St. Jerome relates is no fable. "An Angel," says he, "appeared to Prætextata, a noble lady, who dressed her daughter, Eustochium, too luxuriously, and said to her: "After five months, you will be in hell, if you do not repent, because you have wasted too much thought upon ornamenting the young girl!" Judge, now, if we can sin by vain or indecorous dress, above all if it is worn with evil intention. "If you would clothe

and decorate yourself as a Christian," says St. Chrysostom, "decorate yourself with modesty and retirement. Nothing can make you so beloved." "Take care, women," writes St. Gregory, of Nazianzum, "that you do not improperly and indecorously adorn your heads, or deform the features which God gave you, with false colors, wearing, in consequence, no longer your own faces, but masks. . . . Because it is to be feared that an angry God will say to you: 'Tell me, O woman, who is thy Creator. I have not formed you thus. How, then, happens it that instead of my own image I behold a false idol in you?'" Those to whom this lesson appeals, may take to heart the above-cited teachings of the holy Fathers.

Finally, from what St. Bridget saw by the side of another person, you can understand with whom the Evil One likes to remain: with those who indulge in idleness. If you do not desire to have him near you, shun idleness and occupy yourself according to your station in life. "Idleness is a soft pillow for the devil," says St. Gregory. "With idle people, the devil finds an easy entrance and a secure and agreeable sojourn," says St. Bernard. "Idleness opens the way for all vices," writes St. Chrysostom. Therefore, according to the testimony of St. Cassian, came the common proverb among the hermits: "An industrious man is tempted by one devil, but an idler by hundreds." You may easily comprehend what may be deduced from this.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. ADELAIDE, VIRGIN, ABBESS OF VILlich: AND ST. ADELAIDE, EMPRESS.

St. Adelaide, virgin and Abbess in the Netherlands, was the daughter of Count Megenga and his wife Gerberga. She had an only brother and three sisters. The former early lost his life in the wars, while of her sisters, two married, and the third entered the Convent of St. Mary at Cologne, where she became Abbess. Adelaide, in early youth, had retired from the world and become a member of a holy society, the rules of which were prescribed by St. Jerome. As, however, her parents, after the death of their only son, had built and generously endowed a large church and convent at Villich, they called Adelaide to the new convent, which was entered at the same time by several other pious virgins, who desired to serve God. Adelaide, who was elected Superioress, chose the rules of St. Benedict, and endeavored strictly to fulfil them with those under her care. In prayers, fasting, and other devotional exercises, as well as in all the Christian virtues, she was to all a most perfect model. She had a peculiar gift of leading those under her charge in the path of sanctity. No one could receive her advice and direction but with pleasure, because it was at once perceived how motherly a care their holy Superioress bore for their temporal and spiritual welfare. But her love and care were not confined within the convent walls, but extended to all the needy and sick. Words fail to describe how generous she was. Fifteen poor families were daily provided with food from the convent. For the maintenance of as many more, she gave an estate which she had inherited, so that after she had passed away, her charity might be continued. If any were sick, either in the convent, or in one of the dwellings belonging to it, she never neglected to visit them daily several times, gave them food and medicines, cleaned their rooms, and did all that could be expected from the most loving mother. Her greatest solicitude on such occasions, however, was to strengthen the invalid, by devout conversation, to submit to the will of heaven in patience. After the death of her sister, who was Abbess in the convent of St. Mary, Adelaide, at the command of the Archbishop, took the direction of this convent also, which she governed with admirable ability and wisdom.

After she had lived thus piously for many years, God sent her a painful disease. As soon as she was aware of the danger she was in she desired to receive the holy Sacraments, and having

received them with the greatest piety and reverence, she died happily, while in devotional exercises, in the year of our Lord 1015. The nuns of Villich requested the Archbishop of Cologne, where Adelaide's holy death took place, to allow them the possession of the saintly Abbess's body. As soon as they obtained his permission, they deposited the remains in a boat, which rapidly, and without the help of the oars or other human aid, went up the stream, until it arrived near the convent, which was evidence that at that place the last earthly resting-place of Adelaide was destined to be. Before and after her death God honored her with many miracles.



In the hope that it will not be uninteresting to the reader, I shall annex to the life of St. Adelaide a brief account of another Saint of the same name, who, not in a convent, but in the world and in the palace of a king, attained to great sanctity. She was the daughter of Rudolph II., King of Burgundy, and was married, in her sixteenth year, to Lothair II., King of Italy. After the death of her husband, with whom she had lived three years, and to whom she had borne a son named Louis, Berengarius seized Italy. At the instigation of his malicious wife, he robbed Adelaide of all the insignia of her rank, and cast her into a dungeon, from which, however, she happily found means to escape with one of her maids, and soon afterwards was raised to an Emperor's throne. Otho I., Emperor of Rome, who had been on the way to free her from her captivity, made her his wife. God blessed their union with a son, who received his father's name, and succeeded to the throne as Otho II. Before, however, the young prince was old enough to reign, the imperial husband of the virtuous Adelaide was taken away from her by death, and thus she became a widow for the second time. For several years she was permitted to be at the head of the Government, but perceiving that her son, instigated by calumniators, desired to reign alone, and wished his mother to withdraw, she immediately retired from the court and went to Burgundy, the home of her childhood, where she was received with great joy by her brother, King Conrad, and his wife. Prince Otho had scarcely entered on his reign, when he became aware of the wrong he had done to his mother, and humbly begging her forgiveness, he requested her to return and assist him with her counsel. Adelaide returned, and Otho, now reigning Emperor, manifested towards her the utmost love and reverence during the remainder of his life. On his death, the sceptre fell into the hands of Otho III., whose wife

could not endure the presence of the pious Adelaide, and who, one day, was heard to say that if she lived a year longer, Adelaide should not possess so much as a hand's breadth of land upon the whole earth to reign over. She died, however, soon after, and thus her designs remained unexecuted. Meanwhile the Empress Adelaide lived, in the midst of the court, a very holy life, constantly exercising herself in the Christian virtues, as well as in deeds of kindness. Her generosity in the service of God, and her liberality to the poor, were exemplary. She built several churches and convents and endowed them with rich donations. She distributed her alms with her own hands, and no one left her presence without being relieved. For the last four years of her life, she dispensed with all imperial magnificence, and attired herself in the most humble garments. A slight fever which she contracted, appeared as a summons from the other world, and she prepared herself for death by receiving, with the most perfect submission, the holy Sacraments. Before her end, she requested the Priests who were with her to read the seven penitential Psalms and the Litany of the Saints, and although her agony had already commenced, still she repeated every word until they came to "Have mercy on us," when, having repeated these, the holy Empress gave her soul, so richly adorned with virtue, to God, to receive from Him a much more precious crown than she had worn on earth. Her death took place in the year 1000. What is particularly worthy of admiration in this great woman, is the patience and equanimity with which she bore so many changes of fortune, or rather, so many trials sent by God, so many bitter persecutions. She was never seen disturbed, never dejected. A word of complaint against God or men never escaped her lips, as she always submitted to the will and pleasure of the Almighty. Although she had many opportunities to revenge herself on her slanderers, yet she never made use of them, endeavoring, on the contrary, always to repay them with kindness: an infallible sign of great and heroic virtues. This holy Empress was honored by the Almighty with many and great miracles, both before and after her death. She foretold many future events, and saw, by heavenly revelation, many things that happened far away. Through her intercession many sick persons received health from God. After her death, Hermann, Duke of Suabia, intended to take from a certain convent, founded by the Empress, some property with which she had endowed it. St. Adelaide appeared to a blind man and told him to go to the Duke and threaten him with God's wrath if he did not desist from his purpose. As a testimony of her appearance and the truth of her admonition, she restored the blind man's sight. To another Duke, she

herself, appeared, menacing him with the fire of hell in case he did not immediately return the land, which she had given to a faithful servant, and which the Duke had appropriated to himself. This happened at the same hour at which the servant placed a writing, testifying the gift of the Empress, upon her grave, imploring her assistance. Many other miracles that were wrought on her grave are well authenticated.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The holy Abbess Adelaide shows a particular devotion towards the poor, and endeavors, by pious conversations, to strengthen them in patient submission to the will of God. If an opportunity is offered you to assist the sick, do not neglect it. "Be not slow to visit the sick, for by these things thou shalt be confirmed in love," admonisheth the Holy Ghost (Eccl. vii.). Such a visit is a noble demonstration of your love to God and your neighbor. But be careful that your visits really benefit the sick. Strengthen them in submission to the will of God, and exhort them to bear their sufferings with patience. It is very praiseworthy, in visiting the sick, to read to them out of some devotional book, or to say some prayers, or give some lessons of virtue. Although the sick may not be able to repeat the prayer, at least they will hear it. Very improper is it, however, to carry news to the sick, or speak to them of vain and silly things. It is much preferable to entertain them with spiritual things, as, for instance, the Passion of Christ, the lives of the Saints, heaven, the great mercy of God, patience and submission to the will of Providence, and similar subjects. Such reading, praying, and conversation are profitable to the sick and afford them great comfort.

II. Although the holy Empress Adelaide lived so holy a life in her exalted station, still was she not free

from persecution and injustice. She, however, submitted to the decrees of heaven, was never disturbed or despondent, nor complained either of God or her persecutors, but placed an implicit confidence in the Almighty, who never failed to aid her. All who steadfastly endeavor to serve God may expect the same. Heaven allows us not to live in continual temporal happiness, but sends crosses and sufferings, persecution and adversity, as these are more useful to us than uninterrupted earthly well-being and enjoyment. "Continued well-being in this world," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "often causes man to forget Almighty God, and, unmindful of death, he plunges headlong into sin. Adversity, however, compels man to think of God, and, seeking refuge with Him, he flees from sin." The experience of every day convinces us of this truth. If, therefore, in your endeavor to lead a Christian life, you experience sufferings and adversities, let not this appear to you unaccountable, still less let it abate your zeal, but consider that in this you share the lot of the greatest Saints. Submit humbly to the will of Providence. Patiently bear your cross. Trust in God. "Build your trust on your God," says St. Augustine, "and commit yourself entirely into His hands; and He will let nothing happen to you which is not for the best, though you comprehend not His ways."

TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA, PENITENT.

St. Margaret, who received her surname from the city of Cortona, at which place she closed an austere penitential life, by a holy death, was born in a place called Lariano, in Tuscany. She had scarcely reached her eighth year, when an early death deprived her of her mother, and gave her an opportunity to indulge in an unrestrained life. Having attained womanhood, she secretly left her home, yielding to the seduction of a youth of high rank, with whom, during nine years, she lived a life of shame and crime. One day, as business called this man away, he was murdered upon the road. Three days afterwards, a dog, which had accompanied him, returned, and fiercely barking and howling, took hold of her dress and drew her out of the house. In the street he continued to howl, and ran before her until they had arrived at the spot where the body of the assassinated man lay, already in a state of putrefaction. Margaret sank upon the ground almost senseless, almost beside herself at the sight of the frightfully disfigured corpse, but still more from the thought of the terrible place where, she could not doubt, the youth, taken away in his sins, must now be. Deep contrition for her former life filled her eyes with bitter tears, and she immediately resolved to do penance for her sins. She first went to her father, whom, as related above, she had secretly left, and throwing herself at his feet, she begged him to forgive her and to permit her to return to her home, and begin a better life. Her father received her compassionately, but her stepmother soon drove her out of the house. Seeing herself thus cast off and in danger of sinning anew, she went into her father's garden, and with deep sadness at heart, she sat down under a tree, bitterly weeping and renewing her resolution rather to perish than return to her former life. At last, raising her eyes to heaven, she said, "O, my Saviour! Thou Redeemer of my soul! Wilt Thou allow my soul to perish? Thou hast paid for it as dearly as for the soul of Magdalen. Oh! Thou who hast redeemed me with the price of Thy blood, forsake me not in my misery, but have compassion on me." God listened to the prayer of the penitent sinner, and inspired her to go to Cortona, confess her sins, and follow the directions of her confessor, in regard to her future actions. Margaret followed the heavenly inspiration, went to Cortona, and, with many tears, made a general confession of her whole life to a Franciscan

father who instructed her how to regulate her life. She desired to be admitted among the penitent sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, and, after having given proofs of her constancy, she was received. Her whole future life, which lasted twenty-three years longer, was a continued exercise in virtue, particularly in mortification, penitence, humility, and patience. She lived in a small cell, which she never left, except in obedience to her superiors. Her sustenance was bread and water, her bed the bare ground, and her pillow a stone. She scourged herself daily, until her body was covered with blood, and she passed the greater part of the night in prayer. The constant contemplation of the Passion of Christ filled her heart not only with the most tender love towards her Redeemer, but also with a strong desire to suffer out of love to Him. In all tribulations she evinced admirable patience, and was happy when she was despised and derided by others. Not a day, scarcely an hour passed, in which she did not offer most humble thanks to God, that He had not called her away in her sin, as He had called the youth with whom she had led so shameful a life for so many years. In like manner, not a day nor hour passed in which she did not repent of her sins, and this often with such compunction, that she not only shed tears, but often sank fainting to the ground. After having lived thus for some time, the evil one began to tempt her with suggestions to leave her retreat, or at least to moderate her penitence, so as to be enabled to serve God longer, as her sins had been long since forgiven. Margaret, recognizing the deception, so far from moderating her penances, augmented them. One day, as Satan was besetting her most fearfully, she prostrated herself before the image of the crucified Saviour, and implored His aid. Christ deigned to appear to her, and spoke these comforting words: "Take courage, my daughter! I am with thee in all thy temptations. With the assistance of My grace, thou wilt always conquer. Follow, in all things, the directions of thy confessor." This was neither the first nor the only vision which Margaret had experienced: she was favored with this privilege often by Christ our Lord, by the Blessed Virgin, by her Guardian Angel, and by Saints. Her Guardian Angel assured her also that her sins were forgiven. The souls of several, whom she had freed from purgatory by her prayers and good works, appeared to her; for she sacrificed all her works in their behalf. The most joyful vision which she had of Christ was when he announced to her the hour of her death, adding that all the souls whom her prayers had liberated from purgatory would be present and conduct her soul to heaven. From that hour the heart of Margaret burned with ardent desire to be soon

in the presence of the Lord, and to adore Him with perfect devotion. To this happiness she was called by a holy death, on this day, in the year 1297, having attained the forty-eighth year of her life. She was interred, with great pomp, in the Franciscan Church, and her body, in good preservation, is shown yet in our time. By the grace of God, she performed many miracles during her life, but still more have taken place since her death. She was canonized, in the year 1728, by Benedict XIII.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Margaret remains, during nine years, in great sin, then repents, does penance, and goes to heaven. The youth, who lived just as long in sin, is suddenly taken away in his crimes and goes to eternal punishment. How unfathomable are the judgments of God! To one He is just, to the other merciful. How has He acted towards you? Was not many a one, at the time when you lived in sin—may be even a companion in your evil deeds, and who had, perhaps, not sinned so often as you,—suddenly, and without having received the holy Sacraments, taken away in his sins? You still live: you may repent and save your soul. God gives you still time and opportunity to do penance. “See, then, the goodness and the severity of God,” says St. Paul. “Consider His mercy and His justice. Towards them, indeed, that are fallen, the severity, but towards thee the goodness, of God” (Romans x.). If you consider this rightly, it will be impossible for you not to return daily thanks to your gracious God, nor to refrain from doing immediate penance, earnestly amending your life, and thus remaining in the fear of the Lord until your end. St. Paul adds to the above-cited words: “If thou abide in goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” Consider this. If you, in spite of the immeasurable

goodness of God, remain in sin, or, after having done penance, return to sin, the fate of many others will be yours. Death will cut you off, and you will be cast into everlasting fire.

II. Margaret did not fall again into her former sin, but exercised herself constantly in penance, especially in austere fasting, to punish her body for its former crimes. Two points are to be observed in this. Margaret exercised herself continually, besides her other penances, not only in the ordained fasts, but also in voluntarily fasting at other times. The same was done by all other true penitents. Were all those wrong, or are you wrong, who keep not even the ordained fasts? Most certainly are you wrong, and in case you do not mend this fault, eternal fasting awaits you in hell; for you may rest assured that fasting is not only useful but necessary to sinners as well as to the righteous. It is requisite for the former as an atonement to God for the wrong committed, to the latter as a prevention from doing evil. “Fast because thou hast sinned,” writes St. Chrysostom. “Fast, that thou mayst not sin. Fast, that the grace of God may be with thee. Fast, that thou mayst keep the obtained grace, and that thou mayst not lose it.” It is further to be

observed of our holy penitent that, once liberated from sin by penance, she did not again fall back into her former disorders. Oh! that all sinners would take this to heart, who confess their sins with true penitence. They ought to take all possible care not to commit the same wrongs again, or others, since, otherwise, they become more guilty than before, and make themselves unworthy of the mercy and forgiveness of heaven. "Do not sin," says St. Chrysostom, "after you have received absolution. Do not wound yourself again after the old wounds are healed. Do not stain your soul again, after it has been purified. Consider that the sins committed after having received absolution are much more grievous, the new wounds much more dangerous, and the cleansing from new stains much more difficult. He who, after receiving absolution, sins anew is ungrateful for God's mercy. He who, after having been restored to health, wantonly contracts the same disease deserves, not to be cured; and he who, after being cleansed, again voluntarily defiles himself, is not worthy the grace of being cleansed from his sin." Further, although Margaret had committed great crimes, she was yet, after having done penance, found worthy to be honored with high graces and many visions. The same we find in the lives of St. Peter, St. Magdalen, St. Pelagia, St. Eudoxia, and many

others. Learn from this that God may not only be perfectly reconciled by penance, but also that He specially loves the penitents, and not unfrequently gives them graces which He grants not even to the righteous. The parables of the prodigal son and the lost sheep confirm this comforting truth. For the former, the father prepares a grand feast, which he had not done to his elder, good, and obedient son; the latter is carried, upon the shoulders of the good shepherd, back to the sheepfold: which favor had not been shown to the sheep that remained with the flock. Relating this parable, Christ adds: "I say to you that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety and nine just, who need no penance" (St. Luke xv.). The contemplation of such wonderful mercy should incite you to trust in God, and not to delay your penance. Come, then, are you guilty? Do not despond. Repent! Rejoice God and the angels. The Almighty is not only ready to forgive your sins, but even to benefit you still more than before. "Return to me," says the Lord our God, "and I will take you not only into the former favor, but into still greater;" for, as St. Chrysostom says, "Nothing gives God a greater joy and pleases Him more than the repentance and penance of a sinner."

TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. PETER DAMIAN, CARDINAL AND BISHOP.

In the latter part of the tenth century was born, at Ravenna, in Italy, St. Peter Damian. Left an orphan at an early age, his elder brother took him into his house, where he was treated, not like one so nearly related, but as the lowest servant. The poor boy had neither enough to eat nor decent clothes to wear, and at last he was compelled by his brother to attend to the swine. He, however, complained to no one of treatment so heartless, but obeyed his brother in all things. When in the fields, he occupied most of his time in praying.

One day he found a piece of money, without knowing to whom it belonged. He had a strong desire to buy with it something to eat, or better clothes, but he overcame these wishes, and, instead of so doing, he had a Mass said for his departed parents. This pious deed was soon richly rewarded, for when another brother, who had been long away from Ravenna, returned and saw how cruelly Peter was treated, he took pity on him, gave him food and clothes, and sent him to a school, that he might not grow up ignorant. The unusual talent with which nature had endowed him, his untiring diligence, combined with true piety, made Peter progress so rapidly in all his studies that from a pupil he soon rose to be an excellent teacher, and made himself honored and respected by every one. This, by degrees, influenced his mind in such a manner that he began to be less fervent in his devotional exercises. One day, however, by Divine inspiration, came the thought: "What does it avail in the end to be loved, honored, and praised by man? Does it bring true happiness? Why do you not think more earnestly on your salvation? Will you defer it to future years? Who knows whether you will live so long that you can make up for what you now neglect? Human life is short and uncertain. Is it not better, without delay, to begin what we ought to do?" Actuated by these wholesome thoughts, Peter resolved earnestly to turn his mind from earth to heaven. He therefore devoted himself to prayers and mortifications, in the hope that God would inspire him in what way to direct his life. Providence so ordered it, that two hermits from the Hermitage of the Holy Cross, at Font-Avellana, came to the city. Peter, having become acquainted with them, inquired into their mode of living, and was soon filled with the ardent wish to follow their example. As,

however, their manner of life was extremely austere, he first tried himself in all those exercises which seemed to him hard to execute, such as fasting, watching, long prayers, retirement from all society, and the like; after which he repaired secretly to the hermitage, and was unhesitatingly received by the Superior. The zeal with which Peter commenced and continued his new life was very great, and he became, in a short time, a perfect model of spiritual perfection, while, at the same time, he acquired almost more than human wisdom. On account of his great endowments, his superior appointed him to guide the religious, by his advice and exhortations, in the path of sanctity. In this he evinced so much ability that his fame soon spread to other monasteries, whose religious humbly begged that this preacher might be sent to them, that they also might have the benefit of his instructions. This request was granted, and Peter continually travelled from one monastery to another, preaching and exhorting the religious to strive after holiness. In the course of time he was chosen Abbot, or Superior, which office he filled with great benefit to those in his charge, as well as to their great satisfaction. It also pleased Almighty God further to glorify His faithful servant by the gift of miracles. The fame of these, and still more of his heavenly wisdom, reached Rome; and Stephen IX., then Pope, sent for him, and, after sufficient proofs of his virtue and wisdom, made him Cardinal and Bishop of Ostia. Nothing but obedience could prevail on the humble servant of God to leave his monastery, and it would be no easy task to relate the works of this holy man, not only in Rome, but in other cities to which he was sent on affairs of importance, for the benefit of the Church and the salvation of souls. One day, several years after his nomination as Cardinal, having happily concluded some business upon which the Pope had sent him to Milan and Parma, he was permitted to ask a favor as a recompense for the many great services he had rendered to the Pontiff. The Saint requested to be allowed to return to the desert, and quietly to employ the remainder of his life in preparing himself for the next world. It cost him, however, many prayers and tears before the permission could be obtained. As soon as he had received it, he went back to the desert, not to live there as a great Prelate, but in the same manner as the other hermits. He was even much more exact in keeping the rules, much more austere in fasting, praying, and watching, than the others. It was observed that often, for forty days, he partook of no prepared food, all his sustenance at such times consisting of some herbs and water. While he was indulging in the hope of continuing so peaceful a life, he received a sudden order from the Pope to

undertake a journey upon some affairs of the Church. He obeyed the order, but, as he was returning to his beloved hermitage, having happily concluded the business on which he had been sent, he fell sick on the route near Faenza. He, however, reached the city, and, having been brought to the Convent of St. Mary, he received the holy Sacraments, and died on the feast of the See of St. Peter, for whose honor and advancement he had so zealously labored. His death took place in the year 1072, and the 84th of his age. The works that he left for the benefit of posterity contain the most wholesome advice, and are, to our day, proofs of the greatness of his virtue and learning.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

"Why do you not think more earnestly on working out your salvation?" It was thus that God asked St. Peter Damian, by inspiration, when he became neglectful in the exercise of virtue. Put the same question to yourself. What will be your answer? You pay so much attention to other business: why so little to the business of your salvation? It is by far the most important, as everything depends upon it. If it be well done, eternal happiness will be your portion; if not, you will be lost for all eternity. It is your own affair; the benefit is yours if you do it well; the loss is also yours, and yours alone, if you neglect to do it. It is the only object for which you were placed upon this earth, for you were not created to be rich, happy, or honored, but that you should serve God and eventually go to heaven. Attend, therefore, in future, as Peter did, more carefully to this work than to any other. "Thou art careful and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary" (St. Luke, x.). Thus spoke Christ our Lord to the much-concerned Martha. Cannot the same be just as truthfully said of you? You are occupied with many affairs; and

you think of them day and night. But there is one care that should employ your time most, namely, the care for your salvation. St. Paul writes of this: "But we entreat you, brethren, that you abound more, and that you use your endeavor to be quiet, and that you do your own business" (I. Thess. iv.). Heed it well. "Your business." The business of salvation is your business, and the only one for which you are in the world. Let it concern you before all others, and more than all others. "The greatest care," says St. Eucherius, "should be the care for our salvation, as it is our greatest and most important business." "Life is short and uncertain:" thus we are admonished by the Holy Ghost. Yes, it is surely so. Life is short; it flies quickly; sometimes lasts only a few years; and even if it continued thousands of years, it would still be considered short in comparison with eternity, because all that ends in the course of time must in truth be regarded as short. Life is short. It is also uncertain, because you know not how long it will last. You count, perhaps, on many years, and who knows if you have even many more days to live?

In the course of this year, in this month, on this very day, your life may end. What follows from this? Do as St. Peter did: be solicitous for your salvation. Employ well the short and uncertain time. What you think necessary for your salvation defer not to a future, uncertain time. The hope of having plenty of time to work out their salvation has deceived many, to their eternal ruin. Keep watch that you do not deceive yourself by such a doubtful, dangerous hope. Life is short and uncertain. "Man knoweth not his own end: but as fishes are taken with the hook, and birds are caught by the snare, so men are taken in the evil time, when it shall suddenly come upon them." Thus speaks Holy Writ. Again, what have we to deduce from this? Nothing, but what is further said: "Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly; for neither

work, nor reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, shall be in the grave, whither thou art hastening" (Eccl. ix.). This plainly declares that when you are dead you can no longer work out your own salvation. Therefore, set to work now, without loss of time, without delay, without hesitation, as it is unknown to you when your end will come. Take this admonition of God to your inmost heart. Add to it the words of St. Paul: "Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good" (Gal. vii.). Why? "Time is short," says the same holy Apostle. And when you have trifled away this time, you cannot, in all eternity, repair the loss; as time, once gone, is irrecoverable. "If the time which Divine goodness has bestowed upon us to do penance and work out our salvation is once lost," says St. Bonaventure, "it cannot be recalled in all eternity."

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. MATTHIAS, APOSTLE.

The holy apostle Matthias was born in Bethlehem, a city of Judæa. His parents reared him carefully and instructed him in the Commandments and ordinances of God. As soon as Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, had commenced to preach the Gospel, Matthias was among his hearers, and, taking His teachings deeply to heart, he followed the Divine Master, and was thus admitted among the seventy-two disciples of Christ. He also witnessed most of the miracles which our Saviour wrought during the time of His preaching. It cannot be doubted that Christ, after His resurrection, appeared to him as to others of His disciples, nor that he was present upon the mountain when Christ was so gloriously carried up to heaven. After the ascension of our Lord he repaired, with the apostles and other disciples, into the dining-hall, where they prepared themselves, in obedience to Christ's command, to receive the Holy Ghost. St. Peter, as the

chief of the apostles, rose in the midst of the assemblage and represented to them that one of those men, who had been constant in their attendance on the teachings of Christ, must be chosen in the place of the unhappy Judas. The latter, having betrayed and sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver, had ended his miserable life by hanging himself on a tree, where, his body bursting, had emitted his entrails. The place of this unfortunate traitor, who had been chosen an apostle by Christ, had to be filled and the missing member of the Apostolic College supplied. Two men were proposed; Joseph, who, on account of his piety, was surnamed the just, and Matthias. The meaning of the latter name is, the gift of God. To ascertain which of the two God wished them to choose as His apostle, they all united in the following fervent prayer: "O Lord, Thou who knowest the hearts of all men, manifest to us which of these two Thou hast chosen to take the place and apostolic function which Judas deserted." After having thus prayed they drew lots, and as the choice fell upon Matthias, he was associated with the eleven apostles. On the day of Pentecost he received the holy Ghost with the other apostles and disciples, and began at once to preach Jesus Christ as the true Messiah, bearing witness of His resurrection and ascension, and openly announcing the teaching of the Saviour. When, afterwards, the apostles dispersed over the whole world to preach the Gospel of Christ, the part which was assigned to St. Matthias to convert was Judæa. He began the work of conversion with true apostolic zeal, went through all the cities and villages of the land of Judæa, preaching and announcing Christ, and confirming, with many miracles, the truth of his words, gaining by this means many thousands to the number of the faithful. He was, however, not satisfied with merely converting them, but was also assiduous in directing them to lead a truly Christian life. St. Clement, of Alexandria, records that this holy apostle preached to the newly-converted particularly of mortification: how, in following the precepts of Christ, we must mortify our body, carry our cross, and battle with our evil desires. "Against the flesh," said he, "we must battle and never yield to its sensual desires."

The history of the Church states that St. Matthias, during thirty-three years, continued his apostolic labors with unabated zeal in Judæa and Galilee. Meanwhile, it became unbearable for the obdurate Jews to see the number of the faithful increase daily, and to observe that Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified as a malefactor, was regarded and honored as the Messiah and Saviour of the world: they therefore determined to make away with the apostle. Ananias, the high-priest, caused Matthias to be brought

before him in an assemblage of the elders, and asked how he dared to seduce the people of Judæa from the Commandments of God, and entice them to worship one whom, as a blasphemer, they had nailed to the cross? At the same time he menaced him with death, should he not desist from preaching in future. Matthias, inspired by the Holy Ghost, demonstrated clearly to all assembled that He whom they had crucified as a blasphemer was the Son of God, the Messiah so long promised, who had risen from the dead, and who was to come again to judge both the living and the dead: adding that he would live and die in his faith in Christ. No one in the vast assemblage could refute his words, and, on this account, they became more furious against him. Ananias pronounced the sentence: "Matthias, as a blasphemer, shall be stoned alive." The others assented to this judgment, and, seizing the apostle, they led him out of the city to the place of execution. The Saint went joyfully, thanking God for bestowing upon him the grace to die for Christ, and prayed with bended knees for the salvation of all present and for the whole country. The enraged Jews immediately seized stones, and hurled them on him until he sank half dead upon the ground, when a Roman soldier beheaded him with an axe. The Christians buried his body with great honors, and the holy Empress Helena had it afterwards brought to Rome. When, however, the Empress received, from Pope Sylvester, St. Agritius, as Bishop of Trèves, she gave to him, among other relics, the seamless garment of Jesus and the body of St. Matthias, to remove them to Trèves, where, to this day, they are preserved in great honor, while St. Matthias is invoked as patron of this old and renowned city.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Have you observed what St. Matthias preached of the mortification of the flesh? Read it once more, and learn that not only the religious in the convents, but all Christians, are obliged to practice mortification and to battle against the sensuality of the flesh. Those who yield too much, who allow the flesh all it craves for, and who strive only to do what is agreeable to it, deserve not the name of Christians, neither have they part in Christ nor in the rewards He has promised to his fol-

lowers. Those who wish to belong to Christ must, according to the teachings of St. Paul, "Crucify their flesh with its vices and concupiscences" (Galat. v.). Thus acted this apostle, as well as all the other apostles and disciples of Christ. A life of luxury and sensuality has not yet opened to any one the gates of heaven. Do you perhaps imagine you will be the first? Ah! take care. Believe not the world and the Evil One when they endeavor to persuade you that such will be

the case. They deceive you to your eternal perdition. Believe, much rather, our Lord Jesus Christ, who says, in distinct words; "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matthew xi.). The violent are those who do violence to themselves and their evil inclinations, who suppress them and lead a life of self-immolation. He who, without mortification, without self-abnegation, without valiantly wrestling against irregular desires, would gain salvation, must not imagine that he will thus bear away the kingdom of heaven. Violence must be applied. Therefore it is that Eternal Truth exhorts us with these serious words: "Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter and shall not be able" (St. Luke xiii.). These *many* are, according to St. Chrysostom, those who, without mortification of their flesh, without self-abnegation, without earnest endeavors, suppose they will go to heaven. Are you not one of that number? Will you belong to them also in future?

II. To-day's feast recalls to us the sad history of the wretched Judas, in whose place St. Matthias was chosen an apostle. Judas, an apostle of Christ, became the betrayer of his Divine Master—a suicide, a companion of the devil—and is now forever buried in the fire of hell. What an unhappy, what a terrible fall! But what has precipitated him from the height of his dignity into the abyss of misery? Nothing else but avarice, or the inordinate, the immoderate love of money. To receive thirty pieces of silver he scrupled not at the vilest means, namely, to betray and to sell Christ. Avarice tempted him into the blackest, the most horrible crime; from this he sank into despair, and from despair into hell.

Oh! how true are St. Paul's words: "For they that will become rich, fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful devices, which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money"—the immoderate desire of riches—"is the root of all evil, which some, coveting, have erred from the faith and have entangled themselves in many sorrows" (I. Timothy vi.).

How many thousands who have experienced this are in hell with Judas! Avarice, and the inordinate desire of earthly possessions, mislead men to make use of inadmissible, injurious, and baneful means to become rich. They will lie; they will deceive; they will be faithless; they will steal; they will rob; they will practice usury, prostitution, and injustice; they will oppress poor widows and orphans; they will pay neither earned wages nor debts; and at last they will even murder. To the use of such horrible means, to such heavy crimes, has avarice led many a man. And what has been their end? They have died impenitent in their sins, and they have gone to eternal destruction. How did they fare upon earth? What benefit did they derive from what they had amassed so unrighteously? Some of them seemed to enjoy it for a time, but, when they least thought of it, death came unawares and took everything away from them. With empty hands they went into eternity, leaving all that they possessed to others. Some have had the fate of the unfortunate Judas, of whom St. Chrysostom writes: "He committed the crime, enjoyed not the money, and lost his soul forever." They did not even enjoy what they had unjustly amassed. At the moment they thought of enjoying it the words of the Gospel became true: "Thou fool,

this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (St. Luke xii.) Both the first and the last of whom I spoke have rendered themselves everlastingly unhappy. That is what they got by this sin. Picture it to yourself, and be careful that you never gain earthly goods by unjustifiable means. "Take heed and beware of all covetousness," exhorts our Lord Jesus Christ (St. Luke xii.). True, also, are the words of the Apostle: "The covetous shall not possess the kingdom of God" (I. Cor. vi.).

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. TARASIVS, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

St. Tarasius, one of the most zealous Patriarchs of Constantinople, was born in the imperial capital. His father, a noble patrician, endeavored so to rear his son that in the course of time he might become not only a learned man but also a good Christian. Virtue and knowledge raised Tarasius to the office of Imperial Secretary, and thence to the Patriarchal Chair. He led a most exemplary life, in his intercourse with the world, as well as in his clerical office. At court he had the name of "the holy secretary," and his church called him the "spotless, holy Bishop." At that period the Iconoclast heresy was prevailing. Not only was no honor bestowed on the holy images, but they were also dishonored, broken, burned, and destroyed in the most degrading manner. St. Tarasius, with undaunted courage, resisted so abominable a wickedness. His zeal called a General Council to Constantinople, at which the allowance of due honor to holy images was confirmed, and the heresy of the Iconoclasts condemned. After the assemblage was held, he assiduously labored to keep those under his charge in the exact observance of the rules given by the Council, in order to remove the error of the heretics. All his sermons were to the effect of abolishing the abuses which had crept in, and to inculcate true love for virtue, and an inveterate hatred for sin. He evinced a truly fatherly love toward the poor and unhappy, and neglected no occasion to assist them. Some of them he fed daily at the episcopal palace, and he himself waited on them at table. There were those who did not approve of this, and advised him to discontinue it, as it was beneath the dignity of so high a prelate. He, however, said: "I endeavor to imitate Christ, my Saviour, who did not come upon earth to be served, but to serve."

Still greater was his love and solicitude for the salvation of his flock. Hence, he built several Monasteries, and placed pious men in them, that they might assist him in protecting and teaching those under his charge. He left nothing undone that might profit the faithful, which drew down on him the hatred of the godless. The image-breakers looked upon him as their greatest enemy, and many, who were Catholics in name, could not endure the zeal of the Patriarch. They even went so far as to charge the holy man with many crimes, which they spread abroad in order that he might become contemptible in the eyes of the people, and that they might be encouraged in their heresy and wickedness. St. Tarasius, however, was not disturbed by these calumnies, but comforted himself with his good conscience: he bore all persecutions with the greatest patience, met his opponents with admirable kindness and gentleness, offered his prayers to God on High for them, and assisted them in all their affairs, whenever the opportunity presented itself. In this manner he proved his truly Christian charity; but, upon the following occasion, he showed his episcopal firmness: The Emperor, on some trivial pretext, wished to repudiate his wife and marry Theodora, a lady of the court, of whom he had become enamoured. The holy Patriarch opposed this most vehemently, admonishing the Emperor to desist from so criminal a deed, and threatening him with the divine wrath. He solemnly declared that he would rather suffer the most cruel torture—nay, even death itself, than consent to so great a wrong. But when the Emperor took no heed of the warning, but executed his design, the Saint hesitated not to punish the public scandal with all the power of his episcopal dignity. This, of course, gave his enemies new opportunity to malign him and to incite the Emperor against him. The latter demanded that the Saint should sanction his marriage with Theodora, as, alas! others, fearing the imperial displeasure, had already done, and tried to win him over by alternate promises and menaces. But as he had borne the calumnies with silence and patience, his great soul could despise promises, flatteries, and menaces, and nothing could induce him to accede to the Emperor's wish. "I fear," said he, "the displeasure of the King of kings more than that of a mortal monarch." After the death of this unhappy Emperor, the Empress Irene came once more to the throne. She well knew that the actions of the Patriarch had been just and wise, and she therefore protected him; and punishing his calumniators, prevented them from further injuring him. Under the protection of this upright and Christian Empress, the Saint continued to fulfil his duties with apostolic zeal, to the great benefit of innumerable souls. After he had most satisfactorily

governed the Patriarchal See for twenty-two years, and labored unceasingly to protect the true Faith and to promote the well-being of the souls in his charge; and having borne, with invincible patience, much injustice, humiliation, and persecution, he was attacked by a severe sickness. As soon as he became aware of the danger he was in, he gave all his thoughts to the preparation for a happy death, although, in truth, his entire life had been little else. Having done all that a Christian, solicitous for his salvation, could do, those about him observed, with fear, that, shortly before he drew his last breath, he had a most terrible struggle, the cause of which, when it was over, he himself explained. The Evil Spirit endeavored to bring the holy man to despondency—nay, even to despair—by accusing him of sins, of which he either was not guilty, or which had long since been confessed with repentance. He was heard to exclaim: "No; I am not guilty of this!" And then, soon after, "Yes; this wrong I committed, but, having confessed it with earnest repentance, I hope to obtain mercy from God." It was observed that he trembled with agitation. Those present began to pray fervently for the dying Saint, and continued so to do until he became calm and composed. Praising God for the victory he had won over Satan, he gave his soul peacefully into the hands of Him whom he had, for many long years, so faithfully and so zealously served. This took place in the year of our Lord 806.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Tarasius strongly opposed the Iconoclasts, who not only denied all honor to the holy images, but tried to desecrate and entirely to destroy them. There are, in our day, many, not belonging to our faith, who also reject honoring the holy images, and even teach that it is wrong to make images of Christ and His Saints, and to keep them in churches or at home. We Catholics, however, teach that it is admissible—nay, even salutary and useful—to make, keep, and honor such images. I say honor; for it is false to say of us, as many do, that we worship them as gods. We honor, in them, those whom they represent. This has ever been our teaching. More than a thousand years have

passed since St. Basil wrote: "The honor we show to the images goes over to them whom they represent." St. Ambrose illustrates this by the example of a worldly image, and says: "He who crowns the figure of the Emperor, honors, without doubt, him whose figure he has crowned, and he who derides the image of the Emperor, seems surely to deride the Emperor himself, whose image he has thus derided." The true Church denounces as heretics both the ancient image-breakers and the present despisers of holy images. But what can we think of those people who not only adorn the walls of their dwellings with worldly pictures, but even unchaste ones, and do not give a place to a

Saint or to our Lord Jesus Christ? Is not this a sign that, in a manner, either the spirit of the old Iconoclasts or of the modern heretics has taken possession of them? Take care that you are not one of their number. Show that you are a true Catholic, and an admirer of the Saints, with whom you desire to live for evermore in heaven. See, before all things, that you have the image of your crucified Lord in your room, and say your prayers before it morning and evening. Gaze on it frequently during the day, and think what your Saviour suffered and what you owe Him. These reflections will guard you from sin, urge you to act rightly, and be a comfort to you in sorrow and adversity. "It is certain," writes Origen, "that sin can find no place in a heart which meditates upon the death of Christ." "Let us raise our eyes to the crucified Christ, and our sufferings will appear but trifles to us," writes St. Lawrence Justinian. And again: "The spirit will be renewed, our zeal animated, our love more fervent, and our whole being strengthened and comforted, by the sight of the crucified Lord."

II. Learn, from what took place with Tarasius in his last hour, that Satan, through the recollection of past sins, terribly affrights the dying. What he represents to man during his lifetime is trifling compared with what he places before him, in gigantic form, in the hour of death, in order to deprive him of all hope and drive him to despair. Happy will he be who, at such a moment, can say, with St. Tarasius, that he never committed the sin that Satan reproaches him with, or, at least, that he has confessed it penitently. But woe to him who, until his last hour keeps some sin upon his con-

science which he has either concealed or not confessed truly! "Thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side" (Luke xix.). St. Gregory says, that thus will it be with a dying sinner. The enemies of man will be around him, and affright him with recollections of his past sins. If you wish not to be terrified in your last hour, do nothing with which the Evil Spirit may torment you. If, however, you have been guilty of sin, confess it, as is your duty, without loss of time. Christ our Lord, as the true Faith teaches, has instituted and commanded confession. Through it a sinner receives absolution for all his sins, whatever their number or wickedness may be; and thus the greatest cause of his fear will be removed. He escapes from the danger of being actually lost, and places himself once more in the way of salvation. "Confession," says St. Augustine, "shuts the jaws of hell and opens the gates of Paradise." What incomparable mercy has Christ, our dear Lord, manifested to us sinners, by bestowing upon us so easy and sure a means of saving our souls! We owe Him unceasing gratitude for it, and it must be the greatest comfort to every Catholic to know that he is a member of a Church, which has true Priests, to whom he may go and, confessing his sins, receive absolution. It is, however, all-important that these means, instituted by Christ, should be used rightly, and at the proper time. "If we confess our sins"—in the manner Christ has commanded us—"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity" (St. John i.).

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. PORPHYRIUS, BISHOP OF GAZA.

St. Porphyrius, whom God highly favored and chose to be a valiant defender of the Christian Faith, was born at Thessalonica, in Macedonia, in the year 353 of the Christian Era. After having acquired the necessary knowledge in the arts and sciences, he went, in the twenty-fifth year of his age, into the renowned Monastery of Scete, in Egypt, and there, during five years, he led a most exemplary and very austere life. He then, with the consent of his superiors, visited the holy places of Jerusalem, and retired near the Jordan, into a mountain cave, where he again remained five years. As, however, the dampness of the place, and the changeable climate, caused him, among other infirmities, a continual fever, he returned to Jerusalem, broken in health, and fearfully emaciated. On his arrival there, he was informed that his parents had died, leaving him a large fortune. A youth, named Mark, who was with him, he sent to his home with the commission to sell everything and bring the proceeds to Jerusalem. As soon as this was done, he divided it among the poor and subsisted himself upon alms. He daily visited the holy places with inexpressible devotion, although he was so feeble that he could scarcely walk. One day, having painfully dragged himself up the mountain of Calvary, thinking to end his life there, he fell from a deep swoon into an ecstasy, in which he saw Christ on the cross, and near Him the penitent thief. Porphyrius, remembering instantly the words of the latter, said to the Saviour: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Christ ordered the thief to assist Porphyrius to rise. The thief did so, offering him his hands, saying: "Give thanks to the Lord who has made thee whole." Porphyrius turned towards the Saviour to give thanks to Him, but He, coming down from the cross, laid it into his arms with the command to guard it faithfully. All this Porphyrius saw and heard in his ecstasy. As soon as he recovered his consciousness, he found himself stronger than ever he had been before. Hence, he gave to his Saviour due thanks for so great a benefit. The meaning of his receiving the cross, with the order to guard it, was unknown to him, until he was ordained Priest by the Bishop and the holy cross of Christ was given to his charge. On the death of the Bishop of Gaza, the clergy elected him to fill the holy office; and although, at first, he was unwilling to accept the

dignity, his humility finally gave way to his obedience. At that period there were yet many heathens living in Gaza, and they had several magnificent temples where they sacrificed to their idols. When they heard that St Porphyrius had not only been elected Bishop, but also that he was the greatest enemy and uprooter of their idols, they commissioned some assassins to lie in wait for him and murder him on the road. But Porphyrius escaped all harm and arrived safely in the city. His extraordinary gentleness captivated the hearts of the heathens to such a degree, that they soon began to love and honor him whom they had wished to kill so shortly before. An incident, which happened not long after his arrival, increased still more the love and esteem in which they held him. An unusually protracted drought had so shut up the bowels of the earth that it no longer brought forth fruit. The heathen, seeking help from their gods, ran from one temple to another, and from one idol to another, but the particular object of their adoration was Marna or Jupiter, to whom the most sumptuous temple was dedicated. They made all possible sacrifices to obtain from one or the other of their gods, a fruitful rain. But all their cries for help, all their sacrifices, in fact, all their endeavors, were in vain. St. Porphyrius, after having fasted, went in a procession with the Catholics to a certain chapel, which stood not far from the city. Scarcely had the procession returned, when God sent so fruitful a rain that the fields and meadows soon blossomed, and the most beautiful fruit soon grew before their eyes. Many were, on account of this, converted to the Christian faith. Others praised and thanked Porphyrius, who, by his pious procession, had obtained what they so long had wished for. Some, however, could not endure the honor which grew out of this, to the Bishop and the Catholic Church, and threatened to kill the Saint and all the faithful. Meanwhile, an order arrived from the Emperor to close all the heathen temples. This order, however, was only respected by few of the state officers, many having been bribed by the heathens. Among the temples which remained opened was the one mentioned above, in which they worshipped Marna. Porphyrius, unable to induce the officers to close it, went with John, Archbishop of Cæsarea, to Constantinople, and demanded of the Emperor permission to demolish all the heathen temples and to burn the idols. The Emperor seemed, at first, disposed to grant the request, but some of the judges, bribed by the heathens, prevented him from giving his consent, under the pretext that it would cause an insurrection among the people. The Emperor, however, renewed the order that all heathens should be removed from

offices of honor, and that their temples should be closed. More than this the two holy Bishops could not obtain, although the Empress Eudoxia was herself much interested in their behalf. But she comforted them with the promise that she would endeavor to influence the Emperor to accede to their request. Upon this the Bishops told her, inspired by the Holy Ghost, that her next child would be a son, and heir to the throne. No sooner was this promise fulfilled, than, by direction of the Empress, St. Porphyrius wrote a petition to the Emperor, in which he repeated his former request; and as the young prince, after having received holy baptism, was carried out of the Church, he laid the petition upon the child's breast. He who carried the young prince was instructed how to act on the occasion. Taking the petition, he read it aloud to the Emperor, and then said: "Will your Majesty deign to command that this petition, delivered by the new-born prince, be signed, and the request granted?" Smilingly, the Emperor replied: "I cannot refuse my son's first request." And immediately was the order issued to demolish all the heathen temples. A zealous Catholic officer received the command to execute the imperial order in Gaza. Among the heathen temples destroyed was that dedicated to Marna, and the Empress Eudoxia caused a magnificent Church to be erected in its place in honor of the true God. Inconceivably great was the joy of the Bishop as he thus witnessed the downfall of idolatry, and the rise of Christianity. His anxious care now was to destroy the last remains of idolatry in the hearts of the heathens, and to implant in them a knowledge of the true God. His untiring labor was crowned with success by the conversion of many thousands. Not less was he solicitous to prevent the stealthily creeping heresy from spreading abroad. A heretic woman dared to call the Saint out to a public disputation. He, however, silenced her so effectually with the sign of the holy Cross, that she was unable to utter a word, and had to retire deeply ashamed amidst universal derision. A great many other labors of this holy man, for the protection of the true Church and the salvation of innumerable souls, might be related, but space is wanting, and the above-mentioned facts speak enough in his praise. The end of his labors for the honor of God, which only finished with his life, took place in the year of our Lord, 421: after he had had the happiness to see that, by the grace of the Almighty, he had converted almost all the heathens of the city to the Christian faith.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. As long as St. Porphyrius was in Jerusalem, he daily visited, with great devotion, the holy places where Christ suffered. Personally, you cannot do this; but you can often meditate upon what Christ suffered out of love to us. This it is your duty to do, especially in the holy time of Lent. Meditating on this will not only awaken your love and gratitude to our dear Saviour, but it will also move you to repent of your sins from the depth of your heart, and firmly to determine never, in like manner, to offend this dear Saviour again. For you know that, according to the prophet, sin was the cause of the bitter Passion of Jesus Christ. "But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins" (Isais liii.). The Apostle also says to you, that "Christ is derided anew, and crucified by sin" (Heb. xii.). How often have you renewed Christ's Passion? How often have you crucified Him anew? "You crucify Jesus Christ," says Hugh the Cardinal, "as often as you commit a mortal sin." "Sinners," continues he, "crucify our Lord, because they dare to repeat the cause for which Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross." How often is this done by you? Can you think of it without deeply repenting of your sins as an offence to your merciful Saviour, and without firmly resolving not to become guilty of them in future?

II. St. Porphyrius, when upon the mountain of Calvary, saw, in an ecstasy, his Saviour hanging upon the cross, and was miraculously cured by Him. Thus did Christ recompense the fervent devotion which this holy man evinced to-

wards His bitter Passion. You also will, one day, see this Saviour, who has borne the cross for love of you, when He will come again, in great glory, to judge both the living and the dead. But will He, at that time, heal you and give you life everlasting, or will He eternally condemn you? The life you lead now will determine this. If you renew, by your sins, His bitter Passion, if you again crucify Him, and almost daily raise His wrath by your wickedness, what can you expect but everlasting damnation? And what will your feelings be when you have to appear before Him, and recollect that you have so often and so grievously offended Him? Joseph's brothers could not speak a word for fear, when he, whom they had so cruelly treated, said: "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt." Why? They remembered how hardly they had used him, who never had harmed them. They unexpectedly found themselves in his power, and could only think that he would duly punish them. Much greater will be your fear, when the Divine Judge will say: "I am Jesus, who, out of love to thee, was crucified. I am Jesus whom thou so often hast crucified anew. What evil have I done to thee? Why hast thou acted so ungratefully, so wickedly, towards me? Behold, now thou art in my power, and canst not flee from my just wrath." What answer will you make to these charges? What will you do? Think now, —in the hour that is still your own,—on this truth. Argue, sometimes, with yourself thus: "Jesus, my Saviour, will one day be my judge. I must appear before Him

to receive judgment for all eternity. If I offend Him now, and do not endeavor to appease Him by true repentance, I can only expect eternal damnation. Oh, therefore, I will not offend Him! I will,

while I have time, pacify Him and show Him all possible love and honor." "Fear the Lord and give Him honor, because the hour of His judgment is come" (Apoc xiv.).

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. JULIAN AND HIS COMPANIONS, MARTYRS, AND ST. CORNELIUS,
CENTURION.

In the reign of the cruel Emperor Decius, there lived in Alexandria a rich and noble man, named Julian, who, being afflicted with gout, suffered great pain. But he evinced, in his suffering, not only a truly Christian patience, but also, in all his actions, both fear of God and firm devotion. His lips never uttered complaints of the greatness nor the duration of his anguish, but, like Job, he praised God and submitted cheerfully to His will. He never prayed to be freed from his painful malady, unless with the condition that it might contribute to his salvation, and redound to the honor of God. One day, during an acute paroxysm, he heard of the cruel order of the Emperor Decius that all Christians who refused to sacrifice to the gods should be savagely put to death. After the promulgation of this order, the Christians were everywhere searched for and brought before the Governor. Julian, who could neither stand nor walk, was carried in an arm-chair before the judge by two of his servants, who were also Christians. The Governor, placing several instruments of torture before Julian and his servants, threatened to use them on their bodies, if they would not renounce their faith. One of the servants, frightened, denied Christ and sacrificed to the idols, which greatly grieved Julian. The other, however, Eunos, although advanced in years, followed the example of his master, who had declared without hesitation that he would suffer any martyrdom that could be invented rather than renounce Christ. The Governor immediately ordered that Julian and Eunos should be placed on two camels and be driven through the city for the derision of the people, and, further, that they should be scourged during the ride. The executioners obeyed the order. The two confessors of Christ were conducted through the whole city, derided and mocked at by the heathen, pelted

with mud and stones by the mob, and most cruelly scourged. They did not even spare Julian's feet, though already they were in so great pain. The two brave heroes remained unmoved and undaunted, raising their eyes to heaven and only calling on God for help and aid. A Christian soldier, Besas by name, endeavored to restrain the mob from thus unceasingly and pitilessly mocking and injuring the Saint, but he was immediately seized, and, as he freely confessed his faith, was at once sentenced to die, and was soon after beheaded. After leading Julian and his servant through the whole city, they brought them to the place of execution. Both had been so miserably abused by the long and terrible scourging that they no longer looked like human beings. Once again were they asked if they had considered it well, and whether they would abandon Christ or die a most cruel death. "We will remain true to our Lord," answered Julian, "and will die for love of Him, even as He died for our salvation, that we might have life everlasting." Scarcely had these words passed his lips, when both were cast into a great fire which had been kindled to burn them alive. Surrounded by flames, they raised their hands towards heaven and commended their souls to Christ. Thus, in the year 253, they went through temporal fire to celestial glory, and escaped those flames which, burning through all eternity, can never be quenched.



St. Cornelius, who is registered in the Roman Martyrology on the 2d day of this month, was a heathen centurion in Cæsarea. The Acts of the Apostles relate his conversion. He and his household were very devout, generous to the poor and needy, and spent the greater part of the day in pious exercises. One day, as he was fervently praying, an angel appeared to him, who called him by his name, Cornelius. The pious centurion, struck with fear, at first was unable to utter a word, but having somewhat recovered, he said: "Who art thou, O Lord?" The angel replied: "Thy prayers and alms have mounted up to the throne of God. Send some men to Joppa, to bring to you a certain Simon, surnamed Peter. He lodges with a tanner named Simon, whose house stands on the sea-shore. He will tell you what you have to do." Cornelius obeyed the command and sent two of his household and a God-fearing soldier to Joppa, that they might bring St. Peter to him. While the messengers were going towards Joppa, God told St. Peter in a dream that the time had arrived for him to commence earnestly to labor for the conversion of the heathen. After the vision he was admonished by

the Holy Ghost to go with the men who were standing before the door of his house, whither they wished. Going down to them he made himself known, and asked why they had come. The messengers acquainted him with the desire of Cornelius. The following day St. Peter departed, with several other Christians, for Cæsarea, where, in the mean time, Cornelius had assembled all his friends and acquaintances in his house, in order that they might learn, from the mouth of the apostle, what they needed for their salvation. As soon as he was informed that St. Peter had reached the city, he hastened to meet him, and, prostrating himself, he honored him with bended knees. The apostle raised him from the ground, saying: "Rise; for I am only a man." Arrived at the house of Cornelius, Peter asked, when he saw the assemblage, why they had sent for him. Cornelius related what the angel had ordered him to do, and added: "We are here assembled to hear from thee what the Lord has commanded thee to teach." The apostle began to explain that Christ is the true, the promised Messiah, and told all that had happened during his life and death, until his glorious resurrection. During his exhortation the Holy Ghost came visibly down upon all present, which greatly astonished the companions of St. Peter. The latter, however, hesitated no longer, but baptized Cornelius and all the others, and remained several days longer among them that he might instruct them more thoroughly in the Christian faith. So much we know of the centurion Cornelius from the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. What follows took place afterwards, according to the testimony of trustworthy authors. Cornelius, not satisfied with having been so miraculously saved from the darkness of heathenism, endeavored also to enlighten others. He began among his fellow-citizens, the inhabitants of Cæsarea. He tried to open their eyes to the falsity of their gods by kind exhortations, and to convince them of the truth of the God of the Christians. After this, he accompanied St. Peter to Antioch, which city was at that period inhabited entirely by heathens, where they converted many to the faith of Christ. As the apostle found in Cornelius a truly apostolic zeal, he consecrated him Bishop of Cæsarea. How long he governed his See is unknown, but all who write of his life testify that he converted many thousands in the city and other places by his holy life, zealous preaching, and frequent miracles, and that at last, ripe in years, he was called away to receive his eternal reward. His dwelling was changed into a Church, as St. Jerome says, who visited it during his travels.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "We will remain true to our Lord, and will die for love of Him, even as He died for our salvation." With these words St. Julian and his servant prepared themselves for an excruciating death. Jesus Christ died out of love for us. This alone should induce us to love Him above everything and to endure any afflictions, out of love for Him, with the greatest patience. "Many and great mercies hast thou done unto me, O my Saviour!" says St. Augustine; "therefore I owe Thee perpetual love and praises. One thing, however, moves me more than all, and that is the bitter death which Thou hast endured for me. If there were nothing else, this alone would oblige me to give Thee my entire life, my whole love." On this inconceivable love of your Saviour think when afflictions bear you down, and say, with St. Julian, "I will suffer and die out of love to my Saviour, because He has suffered and died out of love to me." This thought will make your cross light and meritorious. "Let us raise our eyes to the crucified God when misfortunes assail us," says St. Lawrence Jus-

tinian, "and all that we suffer will appear to us as trifles."

II. St. Cornelius teaches those who are not in the right path what they must do to receive from God the gift of the true faith. They should abstain from sin, pray fervently, and give alms according to their means. He further teaches those who have embraced the true faith, not only to be zealous and firm in their new profession, but also assiduously to endeavor to convert others. Finally, he instructs all how advantageous prayer and almsgiving are, in order to receive many graces from God. "Prayers ascend to heaven," says St. Augustine, "and God's mercy descends on us." "Nothing moves God so much to mercy as giving alms," writes St. Gregory Nazianzen. "Prayers must be united to almsgiving before they can possess the power of obtaining anything from God." "When you go to worship the Almighty, take alms with you. Give to the poor, that your prayers may be strengthened by good works, for prayers not accompanied with alms are weak," says St. Chrysostom.

 TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. ROMAN, FOUNDER OF THE CONVENTS OF MOUNT JURA.

St. Roman was the first who, in France, instituted the eremitical life. He was born in Burgundy, towards the end of the fourth century. His parents brought him up righteously and in the fear of the Lord. No sooner did he understand the purpose of his being, than an ardent desire to serve God in innocence and holiness, and as much as possible to avoid all danger to his salvation, took possession of him. To learn better how to live, so

as to gain eternal happiness, he went to Lyons, to the Abbot Sabinus, and remained with him until he was thoroughly instructed how to lead a religious life. After this he went into the forest of Mount Jura, which, at that period, divided Switzerland from Burgundy, where he found a deep valley, called Contat, which seemed to him just the place to lead a solitary and pious life. Here he remained several years in praying, singing Psalms, and devotional reading. A book, "The History of the Early Saints," was almost his only possession, and this he read diligently. He noticed the most remarkable virtues of these Saints, and endeavored to imitate them. He permitted no comfort to his body, but treated it with severity after the example of the Saints. When he had passed, in this manner, a few years, his brother, Lupicinus, came to him. He was older than Roman, and was married. He had, however, preserved his purity, as, like his brother, he desired to serve God. With the consent of his wife he remained with Roman, and, living in great harmony, they animated each other in the exercise of virtue. Satan endeavored to disgust them with their solitary life, and molested them in many various ways. St. Gregory of Tours relates, among other things, that, as often as these fervent servants of God were occupied with their devotional exercises, the Evil Spirit came to disturb them most violently." Much terrified at this they resolved to seek another place, where they might quietly perform their devotions. The first day on which they left their hermitage, night overtook them on the road, and they sought shelter at the hut of a poor widow. When the latter asked them whence they came, and whither they were going, they related to her all that had happened to them and what they intended to do. The woman said: "You ought not, therefore, to have left your dwelling-place, but should have fought more bravely and prayed more fervently to God. In this manner you would have overcome the temptations of Satan." Roman and Lupicinus took her words to heart, were ashamed of their timidity and want of firmness, returned the next day to the desert, began again their former life, and, following the advice, they conquered Satan so effectually, that in future they were able to serve God without being disturbed. The reputation of their piety, which spread through the whole surrounding country, induced many youths and maidens to seek them in the desert and become their disciples. Roman built two Monasteries for the youths, and a Convent for the virgins. All three were soon filled with fervent servants of Almighty God. In the first Monastery he took the place of Superior, in the second his brother, and his sister in the third. The religious in these houses evinced so much zeal in living a holy life, that

their reputation spread over all France. They practised great poverty, an almost unheard-of austerity in chastising their bodies, an uninterrupted silence, long prayers, vigils, and fasts, and, what deserved most admiration, perfect charity and harmony. Roman was a model to all of gentleness, patience, and humility. St. Hilarius, Archbishop of Arles, sent for this faithful servant of God, and, finding that he possessed the necessary knowledge, ordained him Priest, and thus sent him back to his monastery. The devotion with which Roman said holy Mass was most edifying. The stream of tears that he shed at the altar was a sign of the fervor of his inmost heart. Also, at the time of prayer, to which the Saint from earliest childhood had been much devoted, he manifested profound emotion and angelic piety. In adversity and persecution, he always sought the protection of God and the intercession of the Saints. One day he went with Palladius, his companion, to Agaunum, to visit the grave of St. Mauritius, to request the intercession of this Saint. As they, however, before night, could reach neither a city nor a village, they took shelter in a mountain cave, where dwelt two lepers, who had just left it to gather wood. When, on their return, they beheld the two Priests, they were considerably startled, especially as Roman embraced and kissed both without any sign of disgust. Their fear, however, soon changed into inexpressible joy; for when St. Roman took leave of them the following day, he made the sign of the cross over them, and they were instantly cleansed of their disease. This great miracle soon became known, and the holy man was greatly honored on account of it, both by the laity as well as the clergy. But this was extremely irksome to the humble Saint, who therefore hastened to return to his monastery, where he, a few months later, became dangerously ill. He immediately purified his conscience from every stain of sin by a penitent confession, received with great devotion the Holy Communion and the last Sacrament, and soon afterwards, trusting in God, he closed his eyes. The Roman Martyrology says of him that he was greatly renowned on account of his virtues and miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Roman was from early childhood devoted to prayer. But he never performed it without profound emotion and angelical piety. What, above all things, I ask you, for your own salvation, is, that you will never neglect your prayers, as it is most necessary and beneficial for obtaining from God all that you need for the wellbeing of your body and soul. Who does not know the words of Christ?—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (St. Matthew vii.). And, again: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do" (St. John xiv.). These are all

Divine promises, from which we can well comprehend the benefit, the power, and the necessity of prayer. Let it, therefore, never be forgotten by you. But be also mindful that you pray in the spirit in which St. Roman prayed. Let him be your example: pray with devotion and retirement, particularly in church. Consider who you are, and to how great a God you are speaking. "At the time of prayer," says St. Anselm, "man speaks with God. Hence he may well think how reverently, humbly, and attentively he ought to address the great King and Ruler of the World, how fearfully he should plead with so high a Judge, yet with how much confidence in his best of friends."

II. St. Roman purified his conscience, before he departed, from the smallest spot of sin, by a penitential confession. To be able to make a true confession before death is a great grace, as, purifying us from sin, it gives us power happily to escape hell and go to heaven. Pray often to Almighty God to grant you this grace. Take care, however, that you be not of those persons who make themselves unworthy of this grace. These are, first, all who during their life seldom or never make use of the invaluable privilege of holy confession; secondly, those who use it sacrilegiously; thirdly, those who constantly defer it, and, adding to the number of their sins, say: "One confession will do for it all;" and, finally, those who sin on account of confession, namely, those who sin because they think that they can go to confession and thereby easily obtain absolution. Such are wont to say: "I will confess it; confession will forgive any number of our sins." All these people make themselves unworthy of the graces of which I have spoken: the first and second of those mentioned, because they do

not use the remedy that Christ, in His unspeakable mercy, has offered them; the third and fourth, because, counting on God's mercy, they sin with presumption. They also do wrong because they promise to themselves a time when they will go to confession, of which time, however, they cannot be sure. You may say: "I can confess it." But are you not liable to die immediately after you become guilty of sin? You may say, further: "One confession will do for all; I wish to do it all at once." I will confess, but at some other time—not now." But if you wish to confess at another time, if you wish to confess it all at once, must you not have time for such a confession? Most assuredly. Who has promised you such time? Are there not a hundred chances that you may die before you will go to confession?

In conclusion, hear the words of St. Augustine, and ponder them well: "You rely upon God's mercy too much, as if He who promised you remission of sin on doing penance also promised you the time to confess and do the penance. Yet you know not what the morrow may bring forth! You say, rightly, 'God will forgive all my sins if I repent.' I cannot deny that; He promised forgiveness to the penitent; but where you read this, you will not find it written that He also promises you time to confess and repent." How unsafely, and therefore how unwisely, do you act if you intentionally sin, and wantonly remain in sin under the pretext: "I can confess it; one confession will do for it all. I will confess, but at another day." I, however, tell you, that you will either not confess at all or confess unworthily, and, in consequence of it, you and your unworthy confession will go to destruction.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.

ST. LEANDER, BISHOP OF SEVILLE.

St. Leander, renowned in the Church of Christ for his apostolic zeal, was a native of Carthage. His two brothers, Fulgentius and Isidore, as well as his sister Florentina, are all honored by the Church as Saints. Leander was distinguished in his youth for his piety and knowledge, which increased when he went to Seville and entered the Order of St. Benedict, regulating his life according to the dictates of this holy Founder. After the death of the Bishop of Seville, Leander was chosen to succeed him. At that period, Leovigild, who reigned in Spain, was a protector of the Arian heresy, and a bitter enemy of the Catholics. St. Leander found enough work in strengthening the wavering in the true faith, and in bringing the heretics back to the fold of Christ. Both of these labors he performed with unabating zeal. He had the happiness of gaining Hermenegild, the eldest of the royal princes, to the true Church; and also the consolation of seeing that the Prince, with true chivalry, laid down his life for his faith, as will be read on April 13th. The Arian heretics, therefore, hated Leander, and persecuted him in all possible ways. They would most assuredly have taken his life if God had not visibly protected His faithful servant from their fury. They, however, at last prevailed on the King, who was favorably inclined towards them, to banish the Saint and his holy brother, Fulgentius, from the country. But even in his exile he continued to labor zealously to convert the heretics, and abated not his solicitude to confirm his flock in their faith. To this end he wrote several books, in which he refuted the Arian heresy. These books he sent to his diocese, that they might convert the heretics and strengthen Catholics in the true faith. After some time the Saint was recalled to Seville, as Leovigild, the king, had repented of his misdeeds in consequence of the many miracles which, after the beheading of his son, had taken place near his holy body. With deep regret he, on his dying bed, exhorted his other son, Recared, to obey Leander in all things that regarded religion and the life to come. He even called Leander to him, and recommended the Prince to his Episcopal charge, to be instructed by him in the Catholic faith. St. Gregory the Great writes that Leovigild, although acknowledging, in his last illness, the truth of the Catholic religion, could not persuade himself to embrace it, because he

feared an insurrection among his people, instigated by the Arians. Leander fulfilled the King's wish, and Recared, instructed by him, embraced the Christian faith and endeavored also to convert his subjects. That all might be better confirmed in the true faith, Leander requested Pope Gregory to convoke a Council, that the Arian heresy, which infected the people more and more, might be more easily uprooted. The Council took place, and Leander presided over it in the name of the Pope. By his urgent exhortations, he succeeded in bringing it about, that both clergy and laity offered to follow the example of the new King, abjure the Arian heresy, and join the Catholic Church, which, to the great comfort of the King and the Saint, was soon executed. It was from this cause that Leander received the beautiful surname of "Apostle of the Goths," as, through his zeal, the people who had been led away by the dogmas of the heretic Arius were brought to the knowledge of the Catholic faith. Gregory the Great manifested great joy over so unexpected an event as the conversion of a whole nation, and not less pleased was he with the sincere conversion of the King. In a writing, in which he congratulated Leander upon his success, he also said that the Saint should charge the King that his royal life should harmonize with the holiness of the religion which he now professed. The Pope had so high an esteem for Leander that he wrote several letters to him with his own hand, and recommended himself to his prayers. When he was informed that Leander, like himself, was severely afflicted with the gout, he wrote to him, among other things: "I hear that your holiness suffers grievously from the gout. I am afflicted with the same disease. What better can we do in our pain than remember our sins and give thanks to Almighty God; for we are purified by the sufferings of the flesh for what we have sinned in the flesh. Hence we have to be mindful that we go not from these pains, which we can endure, to greater." St. Leander, in future, comforted himself with these words in his sufferings. As soon, however, as his pains abated, he continued his apostolic labors. He instructed the ignorant, visited the sick, comforted and nourished the indigent, admonished the rich to be charitable to the poor, and the poor to be patient. He manifested a special love towards the converted Arians, whom he had borne again to Christ. They were devoted to him as to a father, and endeavored to atone for the many injuries they had done him in their error, by the most distinguished respect and obedience. Few days passed on which the indefatigable Bishop did not preach, in order to implant the truth and morality of the Catholic faith deeper in the hearts of those under his charge. After

laboring and suffering much until he reached his eightieth year, God was pleased to call him, in the year 603, by a happy death, into everlasting life, there to receive the reward of his virtues. His countenance showed, in his last moments, the deep inward joy which God gave him, even in death, as a foretaste of heavenly happiness.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Leander lived a holy life, and labored much for the honor of God and the salvation of souls; but nevertheless he had much to suffer, as well from his painful malady as from the heretics. We still see the same at this day. Most people who live piously and righteously suffer in divers ways. This is to some incomprehensible, particularly when they observe that the wicked prosper and that no such calamities befall them. They sometimes even begin to complain against God, and become doubtful of His justice. But to act so betrays temerity and godlessness. Shall the great God give to a despicable worm of the earth an account of His acts? It should be sufficient for us to know that God is just, and does no wrong to the righteous by sending them suffering. Neither does He wrong by giving the wicked earthly prosperity; by it He even shows His justice. How so? St. Chrysostom, contemplating the rich, godless man in his luxury, and the poor Lazarus in his worldly poverty, says thus: "It is not easy to find a man who is so just and pious that he is entirely free from the least sin. Neither is it easy to find one so thoroughly depraved that he has not at least some spark of good in him. As God is just, and therefore leaves no evil deed unpunished, nor yet a good one unrewarded, He punishes the wrong-doing of the righteous in this world, that, after death, He may so much more

quickly give them the reward of their virtue; while He recompenses the wicked in this world for the little good they have done, as He cannot reward them with heaven on account of their sins. Consequently, Abraham said to the rich man: "Remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, but thou art tormented" (St. Luke xvi.). This means: "You received the reward for the little good you had done, in your earthly prosperity, while Lazarus suffered on earth on account of his sins, and thus atoned for them. He now is recompensed for his piety, while you receive the punishment of your wickedness." Consider this well, dear reader, and decide for yourself if by it God's judgments are not clearly justified. I leave to you the lesson to be drawn from this.

II. Upon the countenance of the dying Leander were distinctly seen the signs of deep inward joy. This joy surely had its source in the thought that he had passed his life in so much holy labor, so much patient suffering; hence he felt that he had good reason to hope that he would receive an eternal reward. This day closes the second month of the year. If to-day your life were to close, would you likewise feel an inner joy and give it an outward expression? Believe me, if you remember how many hours you have spent with the vain children of

the world in luxury, licentiousness, or wickedness, you will then feel no joy, but, on the contrary, great fear and pain. Neither the pleasures tasted in this world nor the possession of honors and riches can give to the dying the least comfort. To have served God in this life, according to our station, to have borne crosses and sufferings patiently—these are the recollections that bring joy and comfort to the dying. Consequently, follow the advice of Thomas à Kempis, who says: "Endeavor so to live that in the hour of your death you shall be happy rather than sad. . . Mortify your body at present by penance, that in the future you may have confidence."

If, however, God, by sickness or any other accident, punishes your body, receive it with patience and gratitude, consoling yourself with the words of St. Gregory, which so greatly comforted St. Leander. They are well worthy of being read again: "What better can we do in our pain, than remember our sins and give thanks to Almighty God; for we are purified by the sufferings of the flesh for what we have sinned in the flesh."

The life of Leander contains another important lesson: he is solicitous only for the salvation of his neighbors, and especially of the flock under his charge. Day and night was he occupied with the conversion of those who were seduced by the Arian heretics. To lead these lost sheep back to the fold of Christ he shuns no labor, no trouble, no danger, no persecution. Even in his exile he continued to work unceasingly for the conversion of the heretics and the constancy of his flock. As he cannot instruct them verbally, he writes books and sends them to his diocese, that the

reading of them may tend to convert the heretics, and strengthen the Catholics to remain firm in the true faith. And he does not discontinue this zeal until he succeeds in uprooting Arianism, not only in his diocese, but in the whole of Spain. Father—Mother of a family, are you as anxious for the salvation of those under your charge as St. Leander was for his flock? Are you not often blind and deaf to their faults? If you are, you may expect a severe judgment at the bar of the Just Judge. Do you not know what St. Paul writes?—"But if any man have not care of his own, and especially of them of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I. Timothy v.). Dear Christian, do you take an interest in your neighbor? If your heart were burning, like St. Leander's, with love to God and to your fellow-beings, how much you might do for their salvation! How many wanderers might you lead back to the right path! Do you not recollect what Christ has commanded His disciples and each one of us?—"But if thy brother offend against thee, go and rebuke him between him and thee alone: if he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother" (St. Matthew xviii.). Oh! act thus if you see that your neighbor errs and follows a path which leads not to heaven, but to hell: pray for him, exhort and instruct him, and continue until you have converted him. Prepare this joy for God and His holy angels. Your converted brother will surely one day, if not now, be grateful to you.

Notice.—To day is the last day of the month. Consider the lesson I gave you at the close of the last month.

FIRST DAY OF MARCH.

ST. EUDOXIA, PENITENT AND MARTYR.

Eudoxia, in whom the immeasurable mercy of God shone forth most brightly, was a Samaritan by birth. From her early years she employed the extraordinary beauty with which God had endowed her, only to offend Him and to ruin many souls; for she led a scandalous and dissolute life. In order to continue the same more easily, she left her native country and went to Heliopolis, a celebrated city of Syria. There she allowed her depraved appetites entire freedom, and became a public scandal to the whole city. With her gorgeous dress, her enticing manners, and especially her great beauty, she captivated the hearts of the young nobles, and so bewitched them, that they visited her by day and night and enriched her with costly presents.

But it was in this scandalous course that the ever-merciful Lord cast His pitying eyes on this great sinner, and changed her into a true penitent. Germanus, a holy monk, travelling on business to the city of Heliopolis, lodged with a Christian, whose dwelling was separated from that of Eudoxia only by a stone wall. The monk, after a short sleep, rose and sang matins in a loud voice, according to the custom of the religious. In like manner he read a spiritual book treating of the dreadful pains of hell and the unspeakable joys of heaven. Eudoxia, whose bedroom was, as we said, separated only by a wall, awoke during the singing, and listened attentively to the chanting and reading. Before this she had never heard either of the pains of hell or of the joys of heaven. She was very much astonished at these things, and was seized with an interior fear. The following day she sent to her neighbor's house to inquire who was the lodger of the preceding night, and begging to have a conversation with him. Germanus came and was asked by Eudoxia who he was, whence he came, and whither he was going. After these questions had been answered, she asked what he had been reading the previous night, and if all that he had read were really true. The holy monk explained to her more clearly the substance of the spiritual book, and assured her that there was nothing false or fictitious in it. He described to her, moreover, what class deserved hell and who merited heaven.

Eudoxia, on hearing this, was seized with fear and trembling, and wept bitterly. "If this is so," said she, "then I am lost for-

ever: the gates of heaven are shut upon me, and I am doomed to be an inmate of hell." "By no means," said Germanus; "there is still a chance of escape."

He then asked about her faith and the kind of life she was leading. She replied: "I am a Samaritan, or, rather, I have no religion at all; for I believed what I wished and lived as it suited me. I am a slave of every vice." After this avowal, St. Germanus represented to her the infinite mercy of God, even towards the most wicked sinners, and that, if it were her earnest wish, she might avoid hell and save her soul. "What must I do," she instantly rejoined, "that I may not be damned?" "Be sorry for your sins, receive instruction and baptism, change your course of life, and persevere in virtue to the end." Eudoxia promised to do everything, and set about executing her promise. The Priest whom she called, and of whom she humbly sought instruction, commanded her to lay aside all wanton parade of dress, to remain in perfect solitude for a week, and to spend the time in prayer, fasting, and penance. She obeyed exactly, and the pious Priest instructed her, during these days, in the mysteries of the true faith.

At the end of the week she went, in the garb of a penitent, to Theodotus, the Bishop of the city, and, casting herself at his feet, earnestly begged for the grace of baptism. The Bishop consented and baptized Eudoxia, to the unutterable astonishment and joy of the whole Christian assembly. Immediately after returning home, she called her servants and slaves before her, advised them all to follow her example, rewarded all generously, and dismissed them. Her robes and jewels, together with all her other property, she distributed in alms to the poor; for she would not retain anything which she had acquired by unlawful means. Now her life was severe and penitential, and edified the whole city. St. Germanus, after giving his advice and encouragement, had returned to the desert; but after some time he came again to the city and exhorted the now repenting Eudoxia to forsake the town and go into the desert, to continue there her penitential life; thus she would be removed from all occasions of falling back into her former vices. She followed this counsel and betook herself to a desert not far from the dwelling of St. Germanus, where she practised the greatest penance.

Philostratus, a young nobleman, who had formerly cultivated a sinful friendship with her, endeavored to turn her aside from her holy resolution, and to induce her to revert to her old vices. He pretended to follow her example and put on the habit of a penitent. Having obtained the permission of St. Germanus, he came under the pretence of consulting her about his holy purpose;

but no sooner were they alone, than he spoke only of his wicked intentions, and strove to allure the penitent away from her solitude. Eudoxia, however, was firm and full of holy zeal; she represented to him, in energetic words, his great wickedness. "Depart," she then said, "think of God, and do penance for your sins."

She persevered for many years in her work of penance. Daily, with the most profound humility, did she thank God for having snatched her in so wonderful a manner from the abyss of hell. She finished her life of penance with a glorious martyrdom in the year 114. Having received the gift of working miracles, she converted many pagans to the faith, and, to hinder further conversions, the pagan centurion, Vincentius, condemned her to be secretly beheaded. But he had not neglected to employ caresses and promises, though in vain, as well as many different torments to shake her constancy.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Notice how Eudoxia was converted, how she reached a virtuous life and eternal salvation. She listened to the reading of a spiritual book. This was the beginning and the road to conversion, virtue, and salvation. Had she been inattentive to this reading, or yielded to sleep, or perhaps read some profane book, she might perhaps never have been converted and saved. Learn from this an all-important truth. Often the salvation of a man depends on a good work in itself apparently small. If man performs it, God bestows various efficacious graces, which assist him in the practice of other good works. In consequence of these, other new graces follow, by means of which man tears himself from sin by true penance, courageously resists temptations, perseveres in virtue, dies happily, and enjoys eternal bliss. This we see in St. Eudoxia and many other Saints. With many the beginning of their conversion and salvation was a devout prayer, attendance at

Mass, the hearing of a sermon, the reading of a spiritual book, some small alms, a work of charity, a victory over self, a voluntary mortification, the sacrifice of some lawful pleasure, and similar good works. Had they been negligent in the performance of these works, they would never have been converted and saved. What lesson flows from what has been said? That you should be zealous in the performance of good works and in the conquest of self. Never omit prayer or Mass, be diligent in listening to the Word of God, read spiritual books, and practice the works of piety already enumerated. It may be that your salvation depends on your fidelity to them.

II. "What must I do in order to escape eternal damnation and to save my soul?" This was the question that Eudoxia asked when she heard for the first time in her life about heaven and hell. By this query she proved how earnest she was to escape the torments of hell

and work out her salvation, because she wanted to know the means necessary for this purpose. Besides, she heroically employed them, as soon as they were made known to her. What is your zeal in this all-important matter? Did it ever occur to you to inquire of your conscience or of the Gospel, or of your confessor, what steps you must take to avoid hell and gain heaven? You will perhaps reply that penance is the most necessary means for salvation. Then I ask you, why do you not resolve to practice it, and why do you delay, if you are really in earnest about your eternal welfare? Behold, the forty days' fast which occurs this month affords you an excellent opportunity of doing penance. Do not hesitate any longer, but fervently resolve to practice penance, and use the present time. Perhaps God will not bestow another occasion of grace like this on you. Keep the prescribed fast conscientiously, for it forms a part of penitential exercises; all true penitents made use of it, and you will find, in the lives of all the Saints, that they were fervent in fasting. Remember that Christ, innocence and holiness itself, fasted rigorously for forty days and nights. Is the obligation less rigorous on you? St. Ambrose says: "It is written, He who says that he remains in Christ must live as He lived. If you wish to be a Christian, imitate your model. He who was without sin, fasted forty days." And do you, who are all covered with sin, wish to exempt yourself from the fast of Lent?

III. I cannot forbear noticing another important point, which is contained in the life of St. Eudoxia. She refused to retain anything which she had earned by her sins and vices, but distributed all among the poor. Alas! many, even nowa-

days, seek to acquire perishable riches by detestable lewdness, robbery, faithlessness, usury, injustice, cheating, and other sinful means. What blindness! what folly! In the first place, these persons commit grievous sins and thus lose all right to their eternal inheritance. Again, the wealth they obtain slips from their hands, and insensibly disappears; they do not prosper, neither are they sure of its continued and peaceful possession. Thirdly, these persons lose the blessing of God and draw down upon themselves the curse of the Almighty not only on their ill-gotten riches, but also on all they possess. Hence it happens that they sometimes lose everything at a moment they least expect it. They burden themselves with the heavy obligation of restitution, and, if possible, of immediate restitution. The duty of restoring ill-gotten goods is necessary for salvation. But few, however, are willing to fulfil this duty, and there consequently remains to them only eternal damnation. Now, tell me, what benefit do they derive from their unjustly-earned wealth? Should they even peaceably enjoy it until death, however, at that supreme moment they must leave all, and burn forever in the flames of hell. Is it not, then, the height of folly to aspire by sinful means after perishable possession? Be careful, then, not to incur such guilt. But if unfortunately you have been so foolish as to act unjustly, ask a prudent confessor what course you must pursue. Finally, remember what the Lord has threatened through his prophet: "Woe to him that heapeth together that which is not his own or enriches himself at his neighbor's expense. How long, also, doth he load himself with thick clay? Woe to him that gathereth an evil covetousness to his

<p>house, that his nest may be on high, and thinketh that he may be delivered out of the hand of evil. Thou hast devised confusion to thy house" (Hab. chap. ii.) to the des-</p>	<p>truction of thy house and to the eternal ruin of thy body and soul.</p> <p>To-day is the first of the month; call to mind the advice given at the end of January.</p>
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SECOND DAY OF MARCH.

ST. CHARLES, EARL OF FLANDERS, AND ST. SWIBERT, BISHOP.

St. Charles was the son of St. Canute, King of Denmark, and of Adelaide, a daughter of Robert, Earl of Flanders. From early childhood he engaged in the exercises of war, but without neglecting those of piety. At the time of the Crusade, he, with many of his nobles, undertook the journey to Jerusalem, and there gave great proofs of his daring and bravery. On his return, the death of Robert, and of his cousin Baldwin, left him sole master of Flanders. As soon as he began to reign, he also displayed unbounded affection for his subjects. He refused to increase the taxes, though repeatedly advised to do so; on the contrary, he diminished them, and during a famine remitted them altogether. He curtailed all useless expenses and abolished many in order to assist the poor. He was a father to his servants, liberally rewarding their services to lessen the temptations of pilfering. To the day laborers and merchants he ordered their dues to be immediately paid. By these and the like means the holy earl gained the affection and esteem of his subjects, who called him the Good.

This tenderness of heart did not prevent Charles from being stern in the protection and defence of his subjects. Thus, when some of his powerful neighbors were ravaging his country, he took up arms and opposed them with all his might, until he finally forced them to submit. In this contest, as well as on many other occasions, he experienced visible assistance from on high; but he also merited it by his piety and holiness; for, notwithstanding his many and grave duties, he never allowed a day to pass without publicly repairing to the church and assisting at the holy sacrifice. Nothing could hinder him in this holy practice, neither heat nor cold, nor rain nor snow. He frequently approached the holy table, but only after long and fervent preparation. To the poor he always gave ready access and a favorable hearing. He himself distributed alms to them and often kissed the hands of the needy. "For," said he, "in every poor man I be-

hold the person of Christ." Often, when he had exhausted every other resource, he would give the clothes off his back for their relief. He had even placed a number of them on his own lands, where they were lodged and nourished. Some one asked him once, why he was so generous to the unfortunate, and he replied, "I must sow in this life, that I may reap in the next." His reverence for the Priests of God was not less remarkable than his liberality to the poor. He allowed no one to speak disrespectfully of the ministers of the Lord and to insult them. He earnestly undertook the defence of their rights and liberties. Some were astonished at his conduct, and wished to know what motives actuated him. This was his answer: "They are the angels and friends of God on earth, and it is for this reason that I love and honor them."

This zeal which the Saint displayed in the protection of the clergy displeased some powerful nobles who coveted the revenues of the Church. Amongst these was a certain Burchard, who had greatly oppressed the clergy, and with whom warnings and threats were useless. Charles, who could no longer brook the haughtiness and obstinacy of this man, had justly punished him. This so exasperated the wretch that he determined on revenge. Charles was accustomed to go to church every morning, and he was informed of the project of Burchard just as he was about to repair to the church. His friends endeavored to restrain him by entreaties, and even by force, from exposing himself to danger. But he replied: "My life is in the hands of God; He will preserve it as long as He pleases. My enemies cannot take it away without His permission." He fearlessly proceeded to the church and performed his devotions, with his usual piety, before the altar of our Blessed Lady. Just as he was finishing, a beggar approached, asking for alms; but at the moment that Charles was stretching forth his hand, the hired assassin sprang forward and struck the holy earl so powerful a blow on the head that he sank lifeless to the ground. This took place in the year 1127. His holy body emitted such an agreeable odor that all were convinced that the Almighty was pleased with His faithful servant. A man who had been lame for a long time, approaching the coffin, touched it, and was restored to the use of his limbs. This encouraged others to seek assistance at the tomb of the Saint, and, to their great consolation, their confidence was not in vain.



St. Swibert was born in England, of noble parents. They lived in the fear of God and brought up their son to a virtuous

life. At the age of fifteen he entered a monastery, in order to serve God more faithfully. After spending nine years there with a great reputation for sanctity, he was sent by Egbert, Archbishop of York, with eleven other apostolical men, to preach the Gospel in Friesland. They began their course at Utrecht, and continued it through Friesland and Holland; later on they traversed Westphalia, Lower Saxony, and Prussia. He closed his laborious career in 717, in the city of Werden, where he had founded a great monastery. Wherever he passed, numbers of idolaters were converted. He destroyed the idols and their temples, building up in their stead churches to the worship of the true God. These he also provided with zealous Priests, to complete the instruction of the new converts. It is not easy to describe the hardships and labors the holy man underwent in his journeys, and in his efforts for the conversion of the idolaters. Neither were persecutions wanting from the ministers of the idols. Once, at the instigation of these impostors, he was so mercilessly maltreated that his life was despaired of. He was then cast into a loathsome dungeon and left to die. But God sent an angel who healed his wounds and set him free. The apostolic man was not discouraged by these and other persecutions, but continued his efforts with undiminished zeal. The more he converted, the more he wished to convert. He was never satisfied with what he had wrought for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In his intercourse with the most savage peoples he was always affable and meek, winning their hearts by his love and patience. In turn, they loved him as a father, yielding a ready obedience to him in everything.

This holy life gained for him the greatest veneration. He feared the least shadow of impurity more than death itself. His contests, when his innocence was exposed, were heroic. He allowed himself no recreation, but daily chastised his body by fasting, discipline, and other works of penance. His love for prayer was so great that he spent the greater portion of the night in it, because during the day his other occupations consumed all his time. The poor and suffering he cherished with a fatherly tenderness. He bore insults with an edifying meekness, and never hurt the feelings of his neighbor with a hard or injurious word. He strove to make himself all to all, that he might gain them to Jesus Christ.

His holy life led many to embrace the true Faith. Moreover, he was also blessed by God with the gift of miracles. It is recorded that he cured many deaf and blind persons, as well as others laboring under diseases, by simply making the sign of the cross. He also raised three dead men to life. Amongst these was a young nobleman, named Splinter. He had been drowned

and his father, who was a pagan, brought him to the temple of the idol, hoping to obtain from him the restoration of his son. But his prayers were in vain. He was advised to have recourse to St. Swibert. The holy Bishop, after a short prayer, commanded the young nobleman to rise in the name of Christ; he immediately rose up, sound and healthy. At the sight of this miracle the father, with all his kin, was converted. By this and many other wonders did God glorify His servant, both before and after death.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Observe how St. Charles acted towards his subjects; how he dealt with servants, laborers, and merchants. Would that men would imitate him, each according to his station of life. God will require a severe account of those rulers who burden their fellow-men with all sorts of taxes. God will also be severe to those who look upon their servants as despicable slaves, or as irrational animals, who overload them with work, who greet them only with abuse and curses, do not allow them even the necessary repose, lessen or retain their hard-earned wages, and sometimes send them away out of their houses without sufficient reason. They should remember that servants are men like themselves, whose souls are as noble before God as their own, perhaps even more acceptable, "Knowing," as St. Paul says, "that the Lord, both of them and you, is in heaven" (Eph. chap. vi.). Let them take to heart the warning of the same apostle, when he speaks: "Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a master in heaven" (Col. chap. iv.). Again the justice of God will require a strict account of those who defraud the laborer of his wages and delay paying their debts. The sin which they commit is one of those

which cry to heaven for vengeance. Hear the words of St. James: "Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth, and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" (James chap. v.). The wages of which you deprive servants or laborers, or put off paying, as also the debts you refuse to pay, cry to heaven for vengeance. On this account did Tobias give the following advice to his son: "If any man hath done any work for thee, immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of thy servant stay with thee at all; see thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another." Oh that all who are concerned would impress this great lesson deeply in their hearts!

II. St. Charles and St. Swibert were unwearied in the exercise of good works. And why? We have the answer in the words of St. Charles: I must sow in this life that I may reap in the next. Remark, as St. Gregory says, the works which are done here, are the seed for eternity. The present life is the time for sowing. Do you desire to have an abundant harvest? Be diligent in sowing, that is to say, be zealous in the performance of good works; be never wearied nor

remiss. It is your gain. The Holy Ghost says: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening let not thy hand cease" (Eccles. xi.). If you sow few good works, your harvest also will be small. St. Paul teaches the same lesson in these words: "He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap of blessings" (II. Cor. chap. ix.). Our two

Saints sowed plentifully and their harvest of good works was rich, and their joy in heaven is great. Imitate them; be zealous and indefatigable in virtuous deeds during life. "And in doing good," says the same apostle, "let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing" (Gal. vi.). The reward of good works is eternal.

THIRD DAY OF MARCH.

ST. CUNEGUNDES, EMPRESS.

St. Cunegundes, a daughter of Sigfried, Count Palatine, saw the light of this world at the end of the tenth century. Hedwige, her mother, brought her up with the most tender care, and instilled into her heart, even from the cradle, sentiments of piety. Her noble gifts of nature appeared even in childhood. Her great beauty and her angelic modesty made her esteemed by every one, while her fervor in prayer and in the practice of virtue rendered her pleasing in the eyes of God and His Saints. Her devotion to our Blessed Lady was most ardent, and her greatest desire was to imitate the example of her Divine Mother by preserving her virginity. God granted her wish, but in a way wonderful to the eyes of the world. Cunegundes was obliged to espouse Henry, Duke of Bavaria, who, on the death of Otho III., was elected Roman Emperor. Pope Benedict VIII. crowned the imperial pair at Rome. Henry valued virginity in the same degree as his spouse; hence they resolved to keep it intact even in the state of marriage. This resolution they confirmed by vow on their wedding-day, and kept it faithfully to the end of their lives. In every other respect they lived together in the greatest union and love. Their only solicitude was to serve God faithfully, to increase His honor and glory by building churches and monasteries, to assist the unfortunate, and to further the spiritual and temporal welfare of their subjects. Their hatred of sin was equal to their love of virtue. They encouraged one another by good example to the practice of virtue.

The Evil Spirit could not brook this holy course of living. He sought to destroy the good understanding between the holy

couple. He instigated some courtiers to excite the flames of jealousy in the breast of Henry about the fidelity of his spouse. Some writers pretend that Satan assumed the guise of a page, and came out of the Queen's apartments while she was still in bed. This happened for three successive days, in the presence of the courtiers. A distrust arose in their hearts, and they communicated it to the Emperor. Whatever truth there is in this story, still it is certain that it produced suspicion in the Emperor's mind. But these abandoned slanderers did not cease to inflame him against his spouse and to defame the holy Empress, not only before the court, but even in the whole city, by the accusation of infidelity to her husband. This calumny deeply grieved St. Cunegundes, but she bore it with silence and patience. However, when she perceived that the court as well as the city were very much scandalized by the crimes attributed to her, and that Henry was afflicted, she declared her innocence in so ardent a manner as to leave no doubts about it. The sentiments of all were changed by this declaration. But in order to do away with all suspicion, and to repair the scandal which had arisen, she offered to undergo the ordeal customary in those days. She had red-hot ploughshares placed on the ground, and, calling upon God to vindicate her innocence, she walked fifteen steps over them with bare feet. She was not in the least injured. Thus was the consoling promise fulfilled which she had received after her prayer, in these words: "Fear not, virgin; the Virgin Mary will protect you." The Emperor and the whole court, who were present, were astonished at this miracle. Henry, now fully convinced of the innocence of Cunegundes, fell at her feet and humbly besought forgiveness. This event did not disturb their future life of union and love. The Empress thanked the Almighty for His wonderful aid, and forgave not only her spouse, but also her slanderers this great injury.

After Henry's death, St. Cunegundes thirsted to lead a retired life; but she could not accomplish her desires until a year after. On the anniversary of the Emperor's death, she went in her imperial robes to the convent church which she had erected and greatly enriched. Many Bishops had been invited to be present at its consecration. After the usual ceremonies, she offered a last gift, a large particle of the Holy Cross, most richly enchased. When the Gospel had been sung, she divested herself of her imperial robes and jewels, and put on the poor brown habit made by her own hands, after it had been blessed by the Bishop. Then she had her hair cut off, as a sign of her complete separation from the world. The Bishop of Paderborn, covering her head with the veil, and placing the ring on her finger to mark the

spouse of Christ, led her, amidst the tears and lamentations of the bystanders, into the convent. Never before had the Empress been happier or appeared more joyful. She lived here fifteen years in the greatest sanctity. She acted as if she were the least of the house. No work was humiliating enough for her—nay, the more abject the occupation the more eagerly she embraced it, and showed more pleasure in its performance than she had ever manifested in her imperial station. Her obedience was most exact, nor would she allow any preference to be shown her; she always chose the worst of everything. After finishing her daily duties, the remaining time she devoted to prayer, or to visiting and nursing the sick. She outstripped all the other sisters in fasting, watching, and other mortifications. She constantly wore hair cloth and allowed her body no relaxation. In a word, she was an admirable example of Christian perfection.

After fifteen years of religious life, the Lord was pleased to visit her with a painful disease, which she looked upon as the forerunner of death. At her request the last Sacraments were administered to her. During her sickness, her greatest delight was to pray and listen to the reading of a pious book. On one occasion Cunegundes fell asleep during the reading; the sister who was reading was likewise overcome by sleep. It happened, whilst both were in this state, that the lamp, falling over, set fire to the curtains and bed. Both awoke at the same moment, but the sister, overcome by fear, was unable to move. Cunegundes, however, by making the sign of the cross, extinguished the flames. Perceiving that the nuns were preparing a rich cloth, fringed with gold, to cover her corpse after death, she turned to them and said: "Away with this; it is not for me. Formerly I was espoused in such a dress to an earthly bridegroom;" and then, pointing to her habit: "In this have I been joined to my heavenly Spouse. Wrap me in it and lay me beside my husband and brother, whom I behold calling me to heaven." After the promise had been given to execute her wishes, she breathed her soul into the hands of her Maker, in the year 1040. Her holy remains were interred with great solemnity in the Cathedral of Bamberg, beside those of her husband Henry. The writers who have more fully written her life, also add a number of miracles wrought through her intercession.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. What anguish of mind did not these odious calumnies cause the tender heart of the chaste Empress ! But still she kept silence : it was only to avoid the scandal that she spoke. Neither did she seek for revenge. What is your conduct, when your honor is attacked—even if only a word is said against you ? Do you not instantly break forth into affronts and abuse, or do you not plan revenge in another way ? Our Lord suffered in silence the most horrible abuse. He did not revenge Himself on his calumniators. The Saints follow His example. What will you do in the future ? Will you not imitate Christ and His Saints ? If you have not determined to do so, what kind of a Christian are you. Christ pardons : He is silent under the greatest insults and affronts. You burn to be revenged. You abuse and injure, hate and persecute those who have offended ! And can you call yourself a Christian ?

II. The holy Empress freely forsakes honors and wealth, allows her body no gratifications, joyfully performs the most humble duties, devotes the rest of her time either to prayer or nursing the sick : she is rigorous in fasting, watching, and other penances, like the other nuns ; and yet her life was one of innocence and purity. She does all this

out of love for her heavenly Bridegroom, and to make her salvation more sure. Now, what do you do for the love of God and your salvation ? You aspire after earthly honor, lavish every comfort on your body ; you waste more time in idleness, play, and gossip, than you give to prayer. You hate mortification, and neglect even the fast of Lent, because you feel inconvenienced by it. Do you imagine that by this course you can enter the same heaven which the Saints sought and obtained by abnegation and the practice of virtue ? “ Verily,” says Thomas à Kempis, “ we deceive ourselves in the disorderly love we have for our flesh.” And, again : “ It is impossible to possess both, to live in pleasure here and reign happily with Christ in heaven.” “ It is difficult,” says St. Jerome—“ nay, impossible—to enjoy present and future delights, to pass from joy to joy, to have every gratification here, and to be happy in the next life.” If this is the case, you ought to reflect seriously which is to be preferred—the present happiness or the future. If you select the future, covet the present less. Never permit your senses any unlawful gratification, but mortify them by fasting and abnegation. Employ your time in good works.

FOURTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. CASIMIR, CONFESSOR.

The Church presents for our imitation an illustrious example of virtue and sanctity in St. Casimir. He was of royal blood, born in the year 1458 at Cracow, the capital of Poland. His father was Casimir III., King of Poland, and his mother Elizabeth, daughter of Albert II., Roman Emperor. His parents omitted nothing to educate their child most carefully, and the remarkable inclination to virtue in the young prince led him to correspond faithfully to the efforts of his parents, and lay the foundation in childhood of his future holiness. He was very successful in his studies, which he made under the direction of John Herbutus, a priest noted for his piety. His greatest pleasure was to pray, visit churches, and study. Whenever his preceptor desired to give Casimir a recreation, and asked what he preferred, his answer always was: "To go to a church and pray. To spend my time there, is more pleasing than to take part in hunts, games, dancing, or any other amusement."

Early in the morning he was the first to hasten to the church, where he often spent whole hours, more like an angel than a man. His fervor during the Holy Sacrifice was so great that he often appeared as if in ecstasy. It was frequently necessary to call him away from the temple of God, lest his health should suffer from his protracted devotions. As he advanced in years, he rose at night and secretly repaired to the church; if the doors were locked, he contented himself with kneeling outside. His posture during this holy exercise was kneeling, or prostrate on the ground. His devotion to the sacred Passion of our Redeemer was so tender that he always was moved to tears at the mere mention of it, or by casting his eyes on the crucifix. He called the Blessed Virgin his dear mother, and he loved her as a child. In her honor he composed a touching hymn, which is in use even at the present day; it begins thus: "Daily, daily sing to Mary," etc. He repeated this every day, and asked to have it placed in the grave with him. To this veneration of our Lord and our Immaculate Lady he joined a most tender pity for the poor. He considered them as his children, and his kindness towards them merited for him the title of Father of the Poor. He recommended their affairs and troubles to his father, and begged that they would be speedily disposed of. Whatever he possessed he gave them. Some courtiers looked

upon his conduct as unbecoming a prince. But Casimir said: "A true nobleman cannot respect his nobility more than when he serves Christ in the person of the poor. As far as I am concerned, my greatest satisfaction is to wait upon the most abject."

He valued worldly honors very little, as is evident from the following fact, amongst others. Uladislaus, his elder brother, was chosen King of Bohemia; and, shortly after this, messengers came from Hungary to demand Casimir for their king, in place of Mathias Hunniades, their lawful sovereign, who had been dethroned. Neither the father nor the son was willing to yield to their petition, but, the messengers threatening to call on the Turks for assistance, the father consented, and dispatched Casimir with a large army into Hungary to take possession of the throne. Mathias, who in the meanwhile had regained the affections of his subjects, was advancing with a numerous force against St. Casimir. The latter, who cared very little for an earthly crown, and who was still less inclined to purchase it at the cost of bloodshed, was overjoyed at this turn of affairs. He led his troops back to Poland, thanking God for having delivered him from so heavy a burden. Moreover, he learned the unsteadiness of earthly glory and distinction, and was more zealous in seeking the honors and possessions which the Lord has promised to His faithful servants.

To aid him in following out this object, he made use of a severity towards himself quite foreign to the general softness and ease of a royal prince. Under the royal robe, which he was obliged to wear according to his rank, he wore a rough hair shirt. He fasted several times a week, and was most exact in the observance of the days of fast and abstinence ordered by the Church, and this even when confined to his bed by sickness. • He used to say that his disease had never been aggravated by abstinence, and if the other remedies were insufficient to restore his health, certainly dispensation from the precepts of the Church could not cure him. He gave only a short time to sleep, and, though he had a royal couch, he always preferred to take his rest on the hard floor. These and other virtues caused Casimir to be venerated as a Saint by the whole court. His angelic purity and his most anxious solicitude to preserve it untarnished has won for him a great name in the annals of the Church. As soon as he understood the greatness of virginal purity, he bound himself by vow to perpetual virginity. To enable himself to keep this promise, he employed constant prayer, the reception of the Sacraments, devotion to the Immaculate Virgin, and continual mortification of his senses; he likewise shunned every dangerous occasion and all suspicious company. Never would he utter

any improper words, or allow them to be spoken in his presence. Thus, even amidst the easy life of the court and the many occasions of sin, he preserved his virginal purity unsullied to the very end of his life.

When he had reached the age of twenty-six, God visited him with a serious illness. After all medicines had proved ineffectual, the physician declared that there was only one remedy left to save the life of the prince. This was no other than that the prince should alter his determination about the preservation of his virginity. The physician and his friends advised him to marry. The prince, without the least hesitation, replied: "I would rather die than not live a virgin. If I had a thousand lives, I would sacrifice them all to remain a virgin." All efforts to alter his resolutions were in vain. The pious prince preferred to die, as he had lived, an angel in the flesh. He knew by revelation the day of his death. He carefully prepared for it. In his last moments he took the crucifix into his hands, saying: "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit," and expired. After a lapse of one hundred and twenty years, his body was taken up, and found without the slightest sign of corruption. The above-mentioned hymn to the Virgin Mary was likewise perfectly preserved. Poland and Lithuania, in their wars against the Turks, experienced the effects of the powerful intercession of St. Casimir. We pass over the various miracles wrought in favor of individuals, who were delivered from many evils by calling on the Saint for assistance.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The greatest delight of St. Casimir was to visit the church, to study, and to pray. To tarry in the temple of God was more acceptable to him than to engage in hunts, games, dances, or other diversions. The hours of the night he devoted to prayer, and while employed in this holy exercise his posture was always most respectful and devout. He joined to prayer, as we see in his life, a spirit of penance altogether foreign to a royal prince. What is your conduct in these two points? Casimir was the son and brother of kings. He lived at court in the midst of all imaginable comforts,

which he might have shared as well as the rest. But he mortifies himself, and uses great severity against himself, being convinced that penance is necessary, or at least useful, for salvation in every station in life. Was he mistaken, or is the present comfortable world not wrong in hating abnegation and searching only after the pleasures of the senses? With which do you side—with St. Casimir or the easy-going world? Now a few words on the other point. In what do you find your greatest delight? Do you love prayer? Do you prefer it to idle amusements? How

long do you remain in the church? What time do you devote to prayer at home or in the church? Examine yourself on this, and then tell me, did St. Casimir, at the hour of death, derive more consolation from his devotion to prayer and study than if he had given up that time to the amusements of his age, which worldlings are only too eager to seize upon? What consolation will those anxiously-sought enjoyments bring you at that dread moment? Be solicitous in time, that you may not suffer regrets when it is too late.

II. St. Casimir was remarkable also for his tender devotion to our Lord crucified, and his Immaculate Mother. Hence his extreme care to protect his purity and virginity; he preferred to die, than live if it were impossible to preserve this precious gem. Are you attached to Jesus and Mary? Then also love the purity adapted to your state of life, for nothing is more pleasing in the sight of God than a chaste life. Greet the Virgin Mother with the hymn of St. Cas-

imir, if you happen to have it. Show your affection for our crucified Redeemer, especially during Lent. With this intention daily read something concerning the Passion and Death of Christ, and recite prayers to Him; often cast your eyes on the crucifix; kiss it, and meditate upon the sufferings which the Saviour has undergone for love of you. I say for love of you, as St. Chrysostom writes: "It is just that each one give thanks to our Lord as if He had come into this world for his sake alone; and He loves each individual as much as He loves the whole world." Hence St. Paul says: "He loved me and delivered Himself for me" (Galat. ii.). "But how will you be thankful," says the same holy father, "for this great love of Christ? Whatsoever you do, you still fall short. Should you even shed your blood for Him, yet you would not requite His love for you. Do, therefore, what is in your power, and offer your most ardent desires of doing still more."

FIFTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. GERASIMUS, ABBOT, AND STS. FELICITAS AND PERPETUA, MARTYRS.

On this day, in the year 475, the celebrated Abbot and hermit Gerasimus closed his earthly career. He was a native of Syria. His early years were devoted to the Divine service, for as a child he entered a monastery and passed many years in it, with the reputation of a Saint. Later, he repaired to a monastery on the banks of the Jordan, in the Holy Land. His virtue and sanctity induced the monks to choose him for their Abbot. Reluctantly he accepted the office, and discharged its duties to the spiritual benefit and satisfaction of his inferiors. He was a model of all virtues, and led the monks to perfection by example rather than by exhortation. In some respects he was admirable

rather than imitable ; for instance, during Lent he did not taste a morsel of food, his whole nourishment being the Blessed Eucharist. This was wonderful indeed.

He merited many special graces and favors by his holy life ; and yet God, in His hidden designs, allowed Gerasimus to be led astray by an Eutychian heretic, named Theodosius ; for he embraced and tenaciously held a great error against the Faith. However, this was the result only of simplicity and inexperience. As soon as the holy Abbot Euthymius represented his error to him, he instantly submitted his judgment. He bewailed his sin long and bitterly, and humbly thanked Euthymius for bringing him back to the path of truth. From this moment the penitent Gerasimus redoubled his fervor in the service of God, striving to retrieve what he had neglected during his erroneous course. He continued this zealous mode of life until death transferred him to a better life.

The history of his life contains, as an undoubted fact, the following wonderful event: One day as the Saint was walking along the banks of the Jordan, meditating on the Divine Mysteries, he was met by a lion, howling fearfully. The beast held up one of his paws, in which there was a long thorn, which caused the foot to swell and fester, and occasioned intense pain. When quite near the Abbot, the lion lifted his foot as if to show it to the holy man and to ask for relief. Gerasimus sat down, and tenderly taking hold of the injured limb, he extracted the thorn, cleansed the wound and bound a cloth around it, and bade the lion to depart in the name of God. The lion, however, would not leave his benefactor, but followed him like a dog. The Abbot considered this a proof of Divine Providence, in order to teach us gratitude to the Lord, our greatest benefactor. He therefore brought him to the monastery and supplied him daily with food. Later, a still more strange occurrence happened with regard to this same lion. The monastery possessed a beast of burden, which was accustomed to carry the water from the river to the monastery. Gerasimus had trained the lion to guard this animal while pasturing. One day a driver of camels was passing along, and noticing the ass, at a distance from the lion, secretly carried him away. When the Abbot saw the lion returning home alone, he thought the poor ass had been devoured by the lion. He therefore imposed upon him the task formerly performed by that animal, to which he patiently submitted. One day, when the thievish driver was leading some camels and other beasts of burden, laden with provisions, to Jerusalem, the lion espied his old companion, who had been stolen. He ran forward, and, seizing the bridle, led back the ass to the Abbot. His inno-

cence being proved, he was released from the labor imposed on him. The lion was absent when St. Gerasimus died, and on his return sought his benefactor everywhere, but not finding him he howled piteously. The monks offered him his ordinary food, but he would not touch it, but continued searching and howling. At last one of the monks said to him: "Come, I will show you where our dear father lies buried." The lion followed, and on reaching the spot, the monk knelt down to pray for the dead. He said to the animal: "Look, here lies our holy Abbot, who fed you until now." The lion, as if he understood every word, sank down on the grave, and, howling, lowered his head to the ground and died.

The writer who related these occurrences heard them from the monks, and adds that God ordained these events to glorify his Saint and to instruct us. The lessons contained in them are obedience and gratitude to God for the many favors received from His bountiful hand; for if a brute showed such obedience and thankfulness for one favor received from a human being, what should not our conduct be? An irrational animal obeys man and is faithful to him; why should not man, endowed with reason, be faithful and obedient to an all-merciful God? A wild beast shows its gratitude for one small service. What is the reason that man does not return thanks for the numberless and immense benefits received from God? Is it not a shame that man should act more unreasonably than a brute?



I will now subjoin a short account of the holy martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas. They lived, during the reign of Septimius Severus and Antoninus, in Mauritania, a country of Africa. Both were married and remarkable for their holy lives. They were unexpectedly arrested and thrown into prison with four other Christians—Satirus, Saturninus, Revocatus, and Secundulus. St. Felicitas was soon to be a mother, whilst Perpetua was nursing an infant. They all prepared themselves by prayer for their approaching martyrdom, and besought the Lord for His powerful assistance. During the night, St. Perpetua beheld a golden ladder extending from the earth to the sky, but bristling with sharp knives and swords, so that it was almost impossible to mount it without injury. At the foot lay an enormous dragon, breathing fire, who obstructed the approach to the ladder. She also noticed that Satirus, her fellow-martyr, was safely mounting, though not without receiving some wounds, and when he had reached the summit was crying out, not to fear the dragon, but to

advance boldly. She related her dream the next day, and all concluded that they would conquer heaven by martyrdom. This caused them great joy, and whilst thanking God, they incessantly begged of Him to assist them in their trials.

They were shortly afterwards brought before the judge, who commanded them to worship the idols or suffer the most cruel torments. They were not frightened, but showed themselves ready to undergo all for the love of Christ. As St. Felicitas was near her time, she was led back to prison, and her sentence was postponed until after her confinement. The judge employed promises and caresses, and even sent her grey-headed father to St. Perpetua, in order to weaken her resolution, and bring her over to the service of the gods. The father did his utmost: falling at her feet, he conjured her to pity his grey hairs by obeying the imperial mandate. He took her babe, and holding it up before her, besought her to have mercy on this innocent being. She remained unshaken, and replied: "Dearest father, in everything else I owe you obedience, but in the present affair, I must obey God rather than you." When the judge saw that every effort was vain, he ordered Perpetua to be stripped and most cruelly scourged, and then to be cast again into a dungeon. The holy matron returned thanks to God for his support in this first trial, and begged for renewed constancy for the future tortures. The others also were arming, by prayer, for the storm, and asked the favor of not being separated from one another in their martyrdom. They petitioned the Lord to hasten the confinement of St. Felicitas, that she might belong to their band. Their prayers were heard, and St. Felicitas was safely delivered. During the throes of childbirth, the sufferings drew forth groans from her. On hearing them, the prison-keeper said: "If you cannot bear this pain, how will you be able to undergo the tortures of to-morrow?" She replied: "To-day I am suffering, but to-morrow Christ will suffer in me and with me. To-day nature struggles with natural pains, but to-morrow the grace of God will overcome all suffering and torments." The sequel proved the truth of her words.

The six martyrs were again brought before the judge, and as they steadfastly refused to deny Christ, he ordered them to be led naked through the streets, and then to be given a prey to the wild beasts. This order was fulfilled. The Saints, gladdened by the approach of their execution, sang, in a clear voice, the verses of the Psalmist: "The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the work of the hands of men; the gods of the Gentiles are devils, but the Lord made the heavens. They have mouths and speak not, they have ears and hear not," etc., etc. The judge,

enraged at their singing, commanded it to be stopped by blows and cuffs. But it was in vain, for they continued praising God until they reached the place of their martyrdom. The wild beasts were let loose, and the two holy matrons, with St. Satirus, were torn to pieces; St. Saturninus and Revocatus perished by the sword; whilst Secundulus died in prison. The holy martyrs Felicitas and Perpetua are frequently mentioned in terms of praise by the Fathers of the Church.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Gerasimus takes no nourishment during the fast of Lent. The Lord does not exact the same of you. He only expects of you the faithful observance of the fast of Lent and the other prescribed days, according to the commands of his holy Church. This obligation binds you under the penalty of eternal damnation. Do not fancy yourself unable to comply with the fast; for what thousands before you have done you also will have the strength to perform. Do not believe heretics, when they assert that the Church has no authority to impose fasting. The Church is your mother and lawful spiritual superior, and therefore can enjoin what is necessary or advantageous for your salvation. Do not give ear to those who would persuade you that the violation of the fast is only a venial offence: because the precepts of the Church, say they, are only the laws of man. You commit grievous sins by breaking the laws made by man, as St. Paul teaches in his Epistle to the Romans. Besides, Christ Himself has commanded us to hear and obey the Church. Hence, when you transgress one of the precepts of the Church, you also offend against the Divine commands, which certainly is sinful. Obedience to the Church is obedience to God. "You know," says St. Paul, "what precepts I have given you . . . for he that de-

spiseth these things, despiseth not man, but God, who also hath given His Holy Spirit in us" (Thess., chap. iv.). But what does such contempt of God deserve? Of what is it the sure mark? St. John gives the answer: "He that knoweth God, heareth us. He that is not of God, heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (I. John, iv.). The spirit of error, that is Satan, teaches us to disobey the Church, and reject her precepts, because they are the laws of man. Now, whoever is swayed by this spirit does not acknowledge God for his master—he is not of God: he belongs not to God, but to the devil, the spirit of error. Moreover, it is a sure mark of eternal damnation to disobey the precepts of the Church: "He that is not of God heareth us not."

II. The holy Perpetua and Felicitas led a most exemplary life, even in their childhood. St. Gerasimus dedicated his early years to the Almighty in a monastery, in the practice of the fear of the Lord, and of all virtues. How did you spend the years of youth? What was your course of life? Reflect on the past. Have you not reason to cry out, with David: "The sins of my youth and my ignorance do not remember" (Ps. xxiv.). Awaken in your heart, to-day and for the future, sincere contrition for the sins of your youth.

Be sorry for your sloth in the Divine service, and ask pardon. Still this is not sufficient, but, like St. Gerasimus, who endeavored to satisfy for what he had neglected while in his heretical errors, do you strive to make amends for your negligence in the things of God. Serve the Lord more faithfully, be zealous in the performance of good works, and neglect nothing that may be conducive to your eternal welfare. Perhaps the end of your days is nigh, and then comes the night in which you are unable to work for salvation. A traveller who has tarried too long at some spot, when he perceives the approach of night, quickens his step to make up for the time lost and reach his destination. Imitate his example. Make haste on your road to heaven. Gain what you have lost. For a long time you have overlooked your

sloth, or perhaps imagined that you might secure heaven, even in your negligence. But you will be terribly deceived. Remember the dream of St. Perpetua. The ladder reaching up to heaven is not covered with roses, but with knives and swords. Blood is the price of its ascent, that is to say, we must exert ourselves, and suffer, if we desire to be saved. Salvation is not obtained by quietly reposing and doing nothing. St. Perpetua and St. Felicitas mounted the ladder without being frightened at the dragon of hell, and the threats of cruel tortures. This was their way to heaven. If you wish to enter there, renew your fervor in the service of Jesus Christ, bear patiently the trials sent from above, and let there be no delay. Let us hasten, therefore, as St. Paul says, to enter into that rest.

SIXTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. CATHARINE OF BOLOGNA, VIRGIN.

St. Catharine, whom the Roman martyrology mentions on the ninth of this month, was descended from rich and noble parents. She was brought up in the fear and love of God. At the age of eleven, in obedience to her father's will, she proceeded to the court, at Ferrara, and became maid to the royal princess. She was very much beloved by the princess, on account of the sweetness of her disposition, but never engaged in anything which might in the least sully or endanger her innocence and purity. She was very much attached to prayer and spiritual reading, and hence court life, with all its vanities, grew most distasteful to her. She eagerly sought the permission to depart, and, on the death of her father, to accomplish her designs of leading a more austere life, she joined a congregation of pious women founded at Ferrara by a holy virgin named Lucia of Mascaronis. These holy women lived in community, and, after performing certain

exterior duties, devoted the remainder of their time to prayer, meditation, and other spiritual exercises.

Even thus early the Almighty began to shower down special graces on this chosen soul, whose only aim was to advance in virtue and perfection. She conceived a vehement desire to know whether her past sins had been forgiven, and whether she was in the state of grace. After having offered up fervent prayers with this intention, the assurance came from on high that all her past offences had been pardoned. But the Lord, in order to prevent Catharine from falling into pride or losing her fervor, showed her, in a vision, the last Judgment. This produced so salutary a fear in her soul that she became more vigilant to avoid sin, as well as every occasion of sin, besides rendering her conscience very sensitive to the slightest faults. After the community had adopted the rule of St. Clare, and embraced the life common to a religious order, St. Catharine's utmost endeavors were turned to conforming herself entirely to this rule, and she was so successful that very soon the important office of Mistress of Novices was imposed on her. Her prudence and wisdom in this position were remarkable. A new convent was founded at Bologna, of which she was chosen Abbess. She was very much opposed to this selection, alleging her unworthiness and unfitness. Christ, however, appeared to her and commanded her to obey. Always obedient, she yielded, and undertook, in company with some other sisters, the journey to the convent of Bologna, where she introduced the strict observance of the religious life.

St. Catharine was no less a model of holiness here than she had been at Ferrara, and drew down upon herself God's choicest gifts. In both convents she had received frequent revelations, as well as visits from Jesus Christ, the Immaculate Mother, and other Saints. Thus, for instance, at Ferrara, having obtained permission to pass the night of Christmas in prayer before the altar, which she continued until four o'clock in the morning, the Blessed Virgin appeared to her. She was neither asleep nor in ecstasy, but fully awake and conscious, when the Blessed Mother showed her the infant Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes. This was not all. St. Catharine had the happiness of holding in her arms the Divine Child and pressing Him to her heart. The vision did not last very long, but a most exquisite odor pervaded the whole choir, and was noticed by the sisterhood on their entering the church. The sick had recourse to the Saint, and were healed by her making the sign of the cross over them. One of the most wonderful cures took place at Bologna. A novice, while digging in the garden, had cut off part of her foot. Catharine was instantly called. She took the severed portion in her left hand, and

held it against the foot while she made the sign of the cross with her right hand over the injured member. She then withdrew her hand, and, to the astonishment of all, the foot was entirely healed. The novice, who had fainted from the pain, now rose up at the command of the Saint, and went about her usual work without experiencing the least inconvenience. Many similar miracles are recounted in her life.

She was a perfect model of all virtues. In the ardor of her charity she resembled a seraph. After forsaking the world, she said to one of her intimate friends: "It was my fixed determination to accomplish most exactly the Divine will and to love God with my whole strength." Her union with God in prayer was so close that she never suffered from the least distraction. To sing the praises of the Lord was her greatest delight. "Come, dearest sisters," she used to say, when the bell rang, "let us praise God: the angels invite us, obedience commands us." Her solicitude to increase the glory of the Almighty was so great that often, with tears in her eyes, she protested her willingness to be burned in the flames of hell, provided it were possible to remain in the grace and love of God, in order to procure the smallest increase of the Divine honor. The constant subject of her meditations was the Passion of our Redeemer, from which she derived a great increase of Divine love. She daily passed hours before the altar, contemplating the infinite charity Christ exhibits in the Blessed Eucharist; and often was she transported out of herself by these considerations. From her infancy she had loved and venerated the Mother of God as the most powerful protectress of her innocence and purity. She struggled heroically against the numerous and fierce temptations with which the spirit of impurity assailed her, and, with the assistance of the Mother of Purity, she was always victorious.

To her love of God and His Blessed Mother she united charity towards her neighbor. In her attendance on the sick she was most assiduous. By her prayers she often obtained immediate help from heaven for those who were grievously tempted. Many and frequent were the prayers, fasts, and penances she offered at the Throne of Mercy for the conversion of sinners. It happened that a criminal was condemned to be burned; his execution was to take place the next day; but he would hear nothing of God or of repentance—nay, he even called on the devil for assistance. On hearing this, Catharine began to pray, and continued her supplications the whole night, in presence of the Blessed Sacrament. "My Lord and my God," she cried out, "I will not depart hence until Thou shalt have given me this soul, so dearly purchased with Thy precious blood." At last, she

heard these consoling words issuing from the tabernacle: "I can refuse thee nothing, the scul is thine." At the same moment the hardened criminal asked for the father-confessor of the Clares, to whom he confessed with the signs of true contrition, and died repenting his past misdeeds.

I pass over many other examples of her heroic virtue, and I will relate some of the circumstances accompanying her happy death, which took place in 1463. St. Catharine knew, by revelation, the hour of her dissolution, which followed after a short but painful illness. She showed the same patience which she had practised her whole life in the many sufferings, persecutions, and slanders to which she was subject. Her only desire was to suffer more. After receiving the last Sacraments, she exhorted the sisters to love and union, to patience in their trials and crosses, and to perseverance. She then gave herself up to devout aspirations, and finally expired whilst pronouncing the sweet names of Jesus and Mary. Her holy remains are still to be seen, incorrupt, clad in the habit of her order, sitting on a chair of gold, and crowned with a royal crown. This is a great proof of the truth of our holy Faith.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Catharine was anxious to know whether her past offences had been pardoned. Her desire was gratified, for she received from God the assurance that all her sins had been forgiven. You have not this assurance, neither are you certain of your eternal salvation; for it is written, "Who can say, My heart is clean; I am pure from sin" (Prov. xx.). "Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred" (Eccl. ix.). St. Paul tells us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. ii.). However, this uncertainty about the forgiveness of your sins, and your salvation must not make you down-hearted and dispirited. On the contrary, it should urge and spur you on to do all in your power to obtain pardon for your sins and secure your eternal welfare. Confess your sins with a contrite heart, in case you have

not done so already. Bewail them daily, and then you will have no reason to doubt their forgiveness. Observe the Commandments of God and the Church, avoid sin, and practice virtue; bear your trials patiently, and persevere in your good resolutions. By this means you will acquire certainty about salvation. Whoever fulfils what God has commanded may rest assured that the Lord will be faithful in His promises. Now, His promises are, forgiveness to the repenting sinner, and heaven to those who persevere in His service. By following this advice, all uncertainty about these two points vanishes.

II. The thought of the last Judgment inspired St. Catharine with a salutary fear of sin, and an ardent love of virtue. In fact, the meditation on the last Judgment is one of the most powerful means to deter

us from sinning. That there is a tribunal before which all must stand, is certain. There all our actions, good and bad, are exposed to the whole world; we must render an account of all our deeds and omissions, and receive the sentence which can never be reversed. But who is to pronounce this sentence—who is the judge? Faith answers, in the words of the Psalmist: "God, a Judge strong and patient" (Ps. vii.). God will be our Judge, who is an omniscient, supreme, and universal Judge. It will be impossible to conceal anything from Him, for He knows all that we have thought, said, done, or omitted: we cannot appeal to a higher tribunal, for He is the supreme and sole Judge of the living and dead. He is just; He regards neither nobility nor wealth; He weighs only the works and judges according to them. He is an Almighty Judge, whose power and jurisdiction no one can escape or resist. He is patient, but, for this reason, also inexorable. He gives us repeated warnings here below; He lavishes on us time to prepare; He invites us to be converted, and urges us by promises and threats to amendment. If we are not moved by all this, there will come a dread day, when He also will be unmoved by tears and supplications. What we have stated above

is the plain teaching of our holy Faith. Why, then, do we live as if we had not to appear before that dread tribunal, and as if the last Judgment were nothing but a fable? Why do we not strive to appease our irritated Judge? How can we dare to offend Him deliberately? The only explanation to be given is, that we seldom think of the last Judgment; we forget who is to be our Judge; otherwise our mode of life would be very different. I beg of you, dear reader, to often recall these truths to your mind, and they will be a safeguard for you, to keep you from sin, and to spur you onward in a Christian life. "In everything," says the author of the *Following of Christ*, "look to the end; consider how you will stand before the Judge, to whom all is unfolded, who is not bribed by presents nor accepts excuses, but who judges according to justice." St. Gregory also writes: "Dear brethren, think of that terrible day, weep over your sins; amend your lives; change your conduct." "Know ye," says the holy man Job, "that there is a judgment—aye, a severe judgment" (Job xix.). And the Psalmist says: "Do not act wickedly . . . for God is the Judge." (Ps. lxxiv.); a just, strong, patient, omniscient, and Almighty Judge.

SEVENTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, CONFESSOR.

St. Thomas, one of the most learned and holy doctors of the Church, was born, in 1225, at the castle of Rocca Sicca, in the kingdom of Naples. His father was Landolph, Count of Aquino, and his mother Theodora, a daughter of the Count of

Chieti. At the age of five he was entrusted to the Benedictines at Monte Cassino to be educated. When he was ten years old, he was sent to Naples to perfect himself in the liberal arts. While sojourning here, he formed acquaintance with a priest belonging to the order of St. Dominic, in consequence of which he sought and obtained admission into that order at the age of fourteen.

His mother, Theodora, was very much displeased, and hastened to Naples with the intention of forcibly taking Thomas from the monastery. St. Thomas had, however, already left Naples for Rome before his mother arrived; and from Rome he had been sent to Paris. His two brothers, who were in the service of the Emperor, at the instance of Theodora, intercepted him on his way to Paris and sent him back a prisoner. The mother exerted all her influence to make him forsake the ecclesiastical state; his sisters likewise opposed his project. All was in vain, for the Saint remained firm, and answered: "In this matter I am bound to obey God before man." His brothers had, in the meanwhile, returned from the wars, and, finding him unshaken in his resolution, were exasperated against him, and heaped injury and abuse on him, even going so far as to tear the clerical dress from his person. They shut him up in a room of the castle and deprived him of the necessary food; in their wickedness they even introduced a dissolute woman to him, who, by her caresses and allurements, should rob him of his purity. The holy youth, as soon as he saw the courtesan entering, understood her purpose, and endeavored to escape from the danger by flight; but, the door being barred on the outside, he was unable to flee. In this extremity he called to heaven for aid. "Do not, O Jesus, and you, purest of Virgins, suffer me to fall into this detestable sin." He shouted for assistance, but all access to him had been shut off. Seeing no other means, the chaste youth seized a burning brand, attacked the abandoned woman, and drove her away. After accomplishing this, he fell on his knees and humbly thanked God for his escape from this peril, renewed his vow of chastity, and implored the Almighty to extend further assistance to him. During the sleep which overtook him during his prayer, he beheld two angels, who congratulated him on his victory, and, as a sign that his petition had been heard, girded his loins with a band, and tightened it so much that the pain awoke him and forced him to cry out. From this moment he was unmolested by temptations or stings of impurity. Still he never neglected the means necessary to preserve his purity, and, according to the testimony of his confessor, he carried his baptismal innocence unsullied to the grave.

After an imprisonment of two years, his sisters, whom he had persuaded to enter religion, lowered him by a rope from the castle. He hastened to the monastery at Naples, where, after having completed the year of noviceship, he was admitted to the solemn profession. He then continued his studies at Rome, Paris, and lastly at Cologne, under the directions of the renowned Albert the Great. At the last-mentioned city his class-mates, for a while, called him the "dumb ox," because he always listened in silence to his professor and never entered into any dispute. Albert, however, once said to them: "You call him a dumb ox, but this dumb ox will one day open his mouth and the whole world will hear his voice." This prophecy was fulfilled; for St. Thomas made such progress in his studies that his fame soon spread over the whole world. Scarcely twenty-five years old, he received the degree of Doctor of Holy Scripture at Paris, where he taught the higher sciences with great success. In this city sprung up that holy friendship between him and St. Bonaventure, of the Order of St. Francis who resembled St. Thomas in virtue and holiness. The many works written by St. Thomas, even on the most difficult subjects, are not only admired by all Christendom, but also much studied and highly prized. They contain a depth of wisdom unsurpassed, which he acquired not by his own application but rather from Divine inspiration, as he himself avowed. Hence, also, is he called the Angelic Doctor. Before beginning to study, to explain the Holy Scriptures, or to preach, or if he met with any difficulty, he always had recourse to prayer, as also fasting and other mortifications.

Though his learning was great, still it was surpassed by his sanctity, and his zeal for the salvation of souls. He was most assiduous in his devotion to the Sacrament of the Altar, and, whenever his health permitted, he offered up the Holy Sacrifice with an awe and piety which resembled an angel's more than that of a man. After his own Mass he served another. Whenever he himself could not celebrate, he assisted at the adorable Sacrifice with so great a fervor as to cause him to shed abundant tears. The office recited by the Priest on the feast of Corpus Christi is the work of his piety. The Saint laid this, as well as his other writings, at the foot of the cross, begging a sign from God that his works were acceptable to the Divine Majesty. He heard these consoling words from the Crucifix: "Thou hast written well of me, Thomas; what recompense dost thou desire?" The Angelical replied: "None other but thyself, Lord." His burning zeal for the salvation of souls led the Saint, even while filling a professor's chair, to devote himself

to preaching for the good of many a sinner. It was a wonderful thing to see a man whose body had been weakened by penance and reduced by sickness, especially a weakness of the stomach, able to compose so many works, teach in the schools, and, besides this, announce the Word of God in His holy temple. His humility, likewise, was most edifying; for though the most learned man, still he always esteemed himself below everybody. He never spoke of himself nor could he bear to hear any one praising him. Repeatedly did the Popes desire to bestow ecclesiastical dignities on him, but the humility of the Saint always knew how to avoid them.

Being called by Gregory X. to attend the General Council at Lyons, he was taken sick on the road, in the Cistercian Abbey of Fossa Nova. The good monks received and treated him with motherly tenderness, and begged him, in imitation of St. Bernard, to dictate an exposition of the Cantic of Canticles. St. Thomas replied: "Give me the spirit of Bernard and I will comply with your request." Being urged, he began the exposition, but he was obliged to interrupt his work, on account of the severity of his illness, on the sixth of March. He then received the last Sacraments, and prepared for death by fervent acts of virtue. When the holy Viaticum was brought to him he adored his Saviour on bended knee, and after making his profession of faith he added: "I wish to die in the Roman Church, to whose judgment I submit all my writings." Extreme Unction was then administered to him, after which, raising his eyes to heaven, he departed this life at the age of fifty. "How is it possible to live in a world full of dangers and perils without committing sin," some one asked St. Thomas, shortly before his death; and this was the answer: "Often recall to mind the account which God requires on the Judgment Day, and live in a manner to have no dread of that day." He was asked, on some other occasion, how a person could be saved: "By earnestly wishing it," said he. Often did he express his surprise that a man, knowing himself to be in a state of mortal sin, could yet sleep quietly or even laugh, considering that he was exposed to eternal perdition.

The Most High, who had rendered St. Thomas so famous during his lifetime for his extraordinary wisdom, glorified him also after death by many great miracles. Many visions which he enjoyed during life are recorded; also his ecstasies, some of them lasting several days, and usually beginning while the Saint was engaged in prayer. To prayer he joined a mortification which extended over all his senses. In his last illness, his stomach craved after a certain kind of fish rare in

the neighborhood. It happened that the physician met with one and brought it to St. Thomas; but the holy man, remembering the example of David, who, in his burning thirst, emptied the proffered cup, sacrificing the draught to the Almighty, also refused to accept the fish out of love for God. This mortification, though it appears small to worldly people, still shows the ardent desire in the Saint to embrace every occasion of self-abnegation. It deserves no less praise than David's act, which is so highly spoken of by the holy fathers. Thus, in the very practice of penance, did St. Thomas end his life.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. How nobly did not Saint Thomas battle when tempted to impurity! Oh, that every man and woman would imitate his example whenever they are enticed or, as it were, forced into it! Shout for assistance, resist in every way possible, if flight be impossible. Alas! many do neither. And why? Because they do not wish to create a disturbance at night; they are unwilling to dishonor or disgrace the monster who tempts them. Would they act in this way if the miscreant were a murderer or a thief? I am positive they would shout for help, were the murderer or the thief even the noblest and greatest man in the country. Now, why is their conduct so different when there is a question of sin? Is he not a murderer who takes away the life of the soul and eternal salvation? Is he no robber who steals the precious treasure of the grace of God? Does such an individual deserve polite treatment? Thieves and murderers are not to be treated according to the rules of politeness. We must fearlessly resist these tempters and imitate St. Thomas in this respect.

II. Wonderful indeed are the answers of St. Thomas to two questions. "How can a person as-

sure himself of his salvation?" was the first question, and the answer: "By earnestly willing it." Hence it depends altogether on the will whether we are saved or lost. St. Chrysostom already, centuries before, had said: "In order to be saved it is only necessary to will it, not carelessly, but earnestly." It is true all men, even the greatest sinners, desire to be saved, but, alas! they have no earnest and determined will. He who desires to learn any science, applies the means adapted to its acquisition. If he takes the necessary steps, then, we see that his intention is earnest. Again, if one intends learning a trade, he must apply the necessary means. It is the same with the work of salvation; without employing the requisite means we shall never be able to reach the end. He is a liar, therefore, who, whilst declaring that he wishes to be saved, still neglects to make use of means for that purpose. Be serious in your endeavors, and recall what was said in the month of January on this head.

The second question put to St. Thomas was this: "How can a person, surrounded by the goods of this world, escape from sin?" and the reply: "Remember the account to be

rendered to the just Judge on the Day of Judgment." There is a salutary truth contained in this answer. If you are anxious to avoid sin, as it is absolutely necessary to obtain salvation, often think of the Day of Judgment. Faith teaches that we will be tried at the tribunal of God's justice for all our thoughts, words, deeds, and omissions. "Know that for all these God will bring thee to judgment" (Eccl. xi.).

"Every one of us shall render account to God for himself" (Rom. xiv.). Mark it well, every one; there is no exception. Kings and emperors must stand before the same Judgment-seat. You cannot appear by proxy before God, the All-wise, the All-powerful, the just and inexorable Judge. "From Him," says St. Bernard, "you can conceal

nothing; He will accept no excuses; neither can you flee from Him, nor appeal to a higher judge." The account will be severe and exact, even of an idle word, as our Saviour tells us. If you cannot stand this scrutiny, the sentence of eternal damnation will be passed on you. Often recall this saving truth, especially in time of temptation. "For what shall I do when God shall rise to judge? And when He shall examine, what shall I answer Him?" (Job xxxi.) Often say to yourself: "Shall I dare to answer to God for what I am about to do or omit?" "We ought," says Thomas-à-Kempis, "to regulate our lives as if we were to be immediately judged." Put this lesson into practice, and you will avoid sin amidst all the perils to which you may be exposed.

EIGHTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. JOHN OF GOD, FOUNDER OF THE ORDER OF CHARITY.

St. John, surnamed of God, a Portuguese, was born at Monte Major. At his birth, an extraordinary heavenly light, in the form of a pillar of fire, was seen over his father's house, and the church bells were rung by invisible hands. At the age of eight he secretly left his father's house with a Priest whom his parents had entertained. The Priest, however, forsaking him on the road, he took service with a shepherd, and served him faithfully until he had reached his twenty-first year. His master then offered him his daughter in marriage, but John refused, and entered the army. Here, imitating his more lax comrades, he led an easy life. It happened that, while out foraging, he was thrown from his horse, and so badly injured that the blood flowed from his mouth and nostrils, and he lay insensible on the ground for two hours. On recovering, he raised himself to a kneeling posture, and, calling on the Queen of Heaven, he was soon restored to perfect health. On another occasion, being placed on guard over some captured

booty, which the enemy re-took, he was condemned to the gallows. The general spared his life, but ordered him to be ignominiously driven from the camp. Upon this, he returned to his former master and became a shepherd again. But soon wearied with this employment, he enlisted and fought against the Turks.

After this war was ended, he travelled to his native country in order to visit his parents. On his arrival he heard how his mother had died of grief, occasioned by his departure, and that his father had entered the Order of St. Francis. This news pierced the soul of John, and he determined to spend the rest of his days in penance—nay, he even resolved on going to Africa to shed his blood for Christ. He reached Ceuta, a city on the coast of Africa, in company with an exiled Portuguese nobleman. The nobleman, who had brought along his family, fell sick at this place, and he begged of John to postpone his projected journey and befriend him in this extreme calamity. John then worked as a laborer, and with his earnings supported the unfortunate family. Shortly after recovering, the gentleman was recalled from banishment, and the Saint, by the advice of his confessor, also retraced his steps to Spain, where he proposed to sell pious books. With this purpose, he bought an assortment of spiritual books and devotional pictures and sold them in the country places. One day John met on the road a poor barefooted lad, shivering with the cold. He took him up in his arms to bring him to a shelter. At first his burden appeared light, but gradually the burden became so heavy that he was obliged to sit down and rest. The boy then made himself known by displaying a pomegranate surmounted by a cross, saying, at the same time: "John, you will find your cross at Granada." After these words he vanished. John, moved by an interior impulse, proceeds to Granada, hears a sermon preached, on the feast of St. Sebastian, by the celebrated F. Avila, which so touched his heart with sorrow for his sins that he wept aloud.

He now began in earnest to lead a penitential life. A desire to humble himself and to court the contempt of the world, induced him to act for a time the part of a madman. He was, therefore, taken to the hospital, locked in a cell, and subjected to harsh treatment. F. Avila, hearing of this, ordered him to lay aside his assumed madness, and perform the will of God by assisting the poor and sick. He obeyed, and waited upon the inmates of the hospital. Very soon, however, he purchased a dwelling with the alms he had gathered, and fitted it up for the reception of the sick. He carried the infirm on his shoulders to this house, and received those who came with the greatest tender-

ness. He cheerfully procured food and medicine for the sick, waited on them by day and night with the most unwearied zeal, consoled them in their sufferings, encouraged them to patience, and, when there was danger of death, exhorted them to receive the last Sacraments. He never left their bedside until death had claimed its own. God also sent him companions, who followed his example with zeal and devotion. Thus did the Order of Charity begin, which afterwards spread over many countries and wrought the salvation of many souls. The clergy and laity were greatly pleased with this work of charity, and gladly assisted John with abundant alms. In asking alms, he always said: "Be merciful to yourself, and do good to yourself; for," he used to say, "almsgiving is of far more benefit to the donor than to the receiver." At other times he would exclaim: "Brethren, do good while you have time." Still abuse and injury from the ill-disposed were not wanting. St. John also had to suffer much from calumny and persecutions. This, however, did not prevent him from continuing his life of sacrifice. To his enemies his answers were always full of meekness, and thoughts of revenge were foreign to him. "If I wish to be saved," he would say, "I must pardon my enemies sooner or later; I will do it rather this moment.

Though he was meek and gentle to his enemies, tender and charitable towards the sick, towards himself he had only austerity; for he chastised his body by watching, fasting, and other penances. Prayer occupied all the time not employed in works of charity. Our Lord and His Blessed Mother frequently appeared to the Saint, while engaged in this exercise. Thus, our Lady once showed him a crown of thorns and placed it on his head, with these words: "Through thorns and suffering, my Divine Son wishes you to merit the crown prepared for you in heaven." Hardly had these words been spoken, when acute pains seized the Saint over his whole body, but more particularly in the head. However, by meditating on the Passion of Christ, and the greatness of the future reward, he lessened his sufferings. On another occasion, he found a traveller lying on the road who seemed to be dangerously ill, and, transporting him to the hospital, he washed his feet and laid him in a bed. As he was about kissing the feet of the poor man, according to his usual custom, he remarked that they were transpierced. It was Christ Himself, under the form of a poor man, who spoke thus to St. John: "Whatever you do to the needy and suffering, I take as done to myself." At another time, he fell to the ground under the weight of a sick man whom he was carrying, and a beautiful youth helped him to arise. On being asked who he was, the reply was

given: "I am the Archangel Raphael, commissioned by the Almighty to protect and guard you and yours."

In addition to the many great spiritual favors which the Saint had received, the Lord also gave him the gift of foretelling the future and of working miracles. I will relate only one example, taken from the Breviary. A great fire broke out in the hospital at Granada. St. John, fearlessly passing through the flames, went from room to room and brought out the sick, and saved much of the furniture, he himself escaping without the slightest harm, though he was exposed to the fury of the flames for half an hour. The flame of Divine love which burned in his heart surpassed the intensity of the material fire. By this great wonder, omitting many others, God wished to honor His indefatigable servant, but glorified him still more by calling him to receive his eternal reward. A burning fever attacked the Saint, but his patience was not at fault. He piously received the last Sacraments, after which he begged to be left alone for some time. Rising and dressing, he threw himself on his knees before the image of the Crucified; he took the sacred emblem in his hands and kissed it, exclaiming: "Into Thy hands, Jesus, I commend my spirit." On hearing these words, some rushed into the room, but found him dead, with the crucifix pressed to his lips. The dead body remained kneeling upright for six hours, exhaling a most sweet odor. His death took place March 8, 1550. The many miracles wrought through his intercession confirmed his sanctity, and have rendered him celebrated throughout all Christendom.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "I must forgive my enemies, sooner or later, if I wish to be saved; therefore I will do it immediately." This was the maxim of St. John, and it was most reasonable. In fact, instant compliance with whatever is required for salvation is the safest plan: delays are ever dangerous. But wrath against our neighbor has this peculiarity, that, if fostered, it strikes deep root in the heart, and becomes enmity and hatred. Besides, the longer it is cherished, the more difficult is the task of tearing it out, just as a tree whose roots have struck deep in the soil is harder to uproot than a sapling which has sprung up. Now, the Gospel plainly teaches that hatred and enmity must be laid aside, in order to be saved. The necessity is absolute. But if this be so, is it not more prudent to divest yourself of this sin now than later, when it will cost you more trouble? Hence, the Holy Ghost says: "Anger resteth in the bosom of a fool" (Eccl. vii.). The wise man does not carry it in his breast, but quickly rejects it,—at least, he does not allow the sun to set on his resentment, but follows the advice

of St. Paul, who says : " Let not the sun go down upon your anger " (Eph. iv.).

II. Have pity on yourselves ; do good ! With this invitation, St. John asked for alms ; for he declared by his expressions that, by giving alms, a person is charitable and merciful to himself, and, whilst pitying others, he also has pity on himself. " A merciful man doth good to his own soul " (Prov. xi.). A most important truth, of which St. Basil writes : " Just as the crop benefits the sower, so also the bread given in alms redounds to the benefit of the giver." In truth the charitable derive more advantages from the alms than the poor, who are the re-

cipients ; for the beggar obtains only a temporal and passing good, while the giver is repaid often by temporal favors, which God bestows as a reward ; but he also reaps an eternal recompense, as Holy Writ so frequently promises heaven to those giving alms. " Give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven " (Mark x.). This is still more evident from the words which Christ will one day address to the elect : " Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat ; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink," etc., etc.

NINTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. FRANCES OF ROME, WIDOW.

St. Frances, an excellent model of all virtues for women in every condition of life, was born at Rome, in the year 1384. Her parents, who were very rich, belonged to the highest nobility. In her very infancy, Frances was noted for her modesty. She never allowed herself to be either gazed upon or touched immodestly, but offered resistance by cries and tears. Retirement and prayer were the delight of the child, and as such she began to practice slight penances and mortifications, which she knew how to conceal from the eyes of her parents. At the age of eleven her sole aspiration was to enter a convent and become a spouse of Jesus Christ, by consecrating to Him her virginity. Her parents, however, opposed this wish and gave her in marriage, when she was twelve years old, to Laurentius Pontianus, an excellent young Roman noble. With him she lived in the greatest union and love, so that, during the forty years of her wedded life, not the slightest misunderstanding, much less quarrel or estrangement, occurred. She took upon herself the education of the children whom God entrusted to her. Her first care was to ground the fear and love of God

so deeply in their tender hearts, that the children found their greatest happiness in following the lessons received from their holy mother. The assurance from on high of the salvation of her son, who died when nine years old, consoled St. Frances; for he appeared to his little sister, who was lying ill, and invited her to heaven.

She presided over her household with the greatest vigilance. She prescribed to her servants hours for prayer, for attending the offices of the Church, and for work. In the evening, she assembled them all and recited night prayers with them and read a pious book to them. When her servants were sick, she did not allow them to be taken to the hospitals, but nursed them at home, saying: "We go to the hospitals to wait upon strangers; why should we not exercise the same charity to those of our household?" After her marriage she no more frequented the public plays, banquets, or other worldly amusements. Her friends were displeased at this, and represented her youth and her position as requiring her to attend these public displays. But she replied: "It is true I am young and belong to a noble family, but I am a Christian and must follow the maxims of the Gospel." She was very simple in her dress, and in later years, with her husband's permission, laid aside all gold and silver ornaments and jewels, and wore only woollen garments. In her palace there was no picture which could offend the most sensitive eye, but only such as excited to devotion.

She allowed no profane or superstitious book or novel to be in the hands of her domestics. The time she could spare from her family duties she consecrated to prayer or deeds of charity. The life of abnegation which she had begun when a child was greatly increased in her married state. In a word, her life was most holy and edifying, and many noble matrons followed her example.

God, in order to try the virtue of Frances, permitted Ladislaus, King of Naples, to capture the city of Rome. Her husband's palace was pillaged, himself robbed of everything, taken prisoner, and sent into banishment. There was none who did not grieve at the misfortune which had befallen Frances; she alone displayed Christian patience, returning thanks to God for this trial. When she was informed of the confiscation of her property and the banishment of her husband, she exclaimed, with holy Job: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job i.). After a short time her property was restored, and her husband recalled from exile. In acknowledgment of this favor, she strove

to lead a more perfect life, and induced her husband to follow her example. Henceforth, they lived together as brother and sister, employing their time in prayer and works of mercy and penance. Frances took but one meal a day and replaced the linen she was wont to wear by a hair cloth, girded herself with an iron chain, and slept only two hours, either on a straw bed or a plaited coverlet. She punished her smallest faults by severe scourgings and other austerities. Her long and rigid fasts so weakened her stomach as to cause her continual sufferings; still she did not abandon the practice of fasting. Her treatment of her neighbor was entirely different. She frequently visited the hospitals and charitable institutions, bringing alms to the poor, preparing food for the needy, arranging their beds and rooms; in a word, performing the most menial services. It is known that she cleansed sores running with putrid matter, and sometimes, to overcome self, she swallowed some of the water tainted with this corruption.

After the death of her husband, she repaired to the house she had founded for those women, who, though not living under the monastic rules, still proposed leading a more perfect life. They were called Oblates, because they had offered themselves to the service of God. Frances, with a cord around her neck, cast herself at the feet of the superioress and begged to be received as a sinner among the Oblates, because she was resolved to lead a life of penance. The whole community received her as their founder, but Frances would not allow herself to be treated as such, but wished to be the humble servant of all. No task was too low for her: she embraced it with the greatest joy. In the course of time she was obliged to assume the post of superioress; nevertheless, she continued to discharge all the humblest duties. During the four years spent in this position she advanced wonderfully, in perfection. She was then called to visit her brother, who was lying ill, and just as she prepared to return she was attacked by a violent fever. Our Lord appeared to her and foretold the day of her death, and invited her to join the Saints in heaven. Frances informed her confessor of this revelation, and begged for the last Sacraments, which she received with the sentiments of the most edifying piety. Her confessor, noticing that her lips were moving when the tongue refused to perform its function, inquired if she had any further request to make. She, with difficulty, answered: "I am reciting the office of the Blessed Virgin." This had been a daily practice with her, even when a child. She expired during this prayer, at the age of fifty-six.

Frances had been favored, during her mortal career, with

singular graces. Amongst others, the most remarkable one was to behold her guardian angel ever at her side. He guided and protected her on many occasions. He reproached her when she committed any fault, and withdrew his presence until she had repented and promised amendment. Once, when a useless conversation was carried on in her presence, which, out of human respect, she did not interrupt, her guardian angel gave her such a slap that it was heard by all present. On another occasion, when she could not prevent a sinful conversation, she saw the angel veiling his face to mark his hatred for sin. She was also frequently visited by the Mother of God and other Saints. Shortly after her marriage she fell sick, and some advised her to employ a superstitious remedy; but she would not accept it, saying: "I would sooner die than preserve my life by sinful means." Hardly had she said this, when St. Alexius appeared to her and restored her to health. At another time she was just recovering from a dangerous illness, when the angel Raphael showed her the pains of the damned. This encouraged her to bear patiently all the sufferings and trials of this life. Our Divine Redeemer often appeared to her while she was meditating on His Passion, which was always attended by abundance of tears. Her refuge in all temptations and persecutions was the crucified Saviour and His blessed Mother. She confessed that her recourse to these was never without a new increase of strength and consolation. Limited as our space is, we must leave to others the history of the many favors bestowed on her by the Almighty, as well as of the numerous miracles wrought through her intercession.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The life of St. Frances contains so many lessons for our instruction, as well as examples for imitation, that I will divide the usual Considerations into more points, saying only a few words under each heading.

I. St. Frances, even in her infancy, wept and cried out whenever any one durst gaze upon and touch her improperly. Be careful that, after having reached the age of reason, you do not allow your eyes to wander and look upon dangerous or indecent objects. Beware, likewise, of touching yourself

or others immodestly. Never suffer others to take any liberty with you. Offer a bold resistance. Hell is filled with persons who pursued a different course.

II. The holy child loved prayer and retirement. It is a very bad sign when it is necessary to force children to pray—when they prefer to play and run about the streets with wicked children rather than remain at home and pray. Parents ought to be very watchful over their children on this point.

III. Frances, in obedience to

the will of her parents, entered into the holy bonds of wedlock, and found happiness. Children commit grievous sins by entering the marriage state without the knowledge or against the will of their parents. Unless there are weighty reasons for this conduct, they need expect no blessing from God on their marriage. Parents, likewise, are guilty of great sins by forcing their children to marry when they have no vocation for this state; or by imposing on them persons for whom they feel no love, but rather aversion. With how many sins do not parents thus load their consciences! What a dreadful account will they have to render at the tribunal of God!

IV. St. Frances lived a wedded life, for forty years, without having the least misunderstanding with her husband. What will those married people say to this who can hardly pass forty days, or even forty hours, without quarrel and discord—who are a source of anger to each other, abusing and cursing one another? Can they hope that the God of Peace will dwell with them, and bestow His blessing on them?

V. The first impressions which the pious mother was most careful to fix deeply in the hearts of her children were the fear and love of God. She may have learned the lesson from Tobias, of whom Holy Writ gives this distinguished testimony: "And he had a son, and from his infancy he taught him to fear God and to abstain from all sin" (Tob. i.). Why do not parents inculcate similar lessons to their children from their very infancy? How can they expect to make their

children servants of God, and happy citizens of the kingdom of God, if they do not early inspire them with the fear of God and teach them to avoid sin?

There are many subjects contained in the life of St. Frances which I am forced to leave to your own reflections. For instance, the singular care of her servants, especially when they were sick; her wonderful love for the poor; her plainness of dress; her austerity, and the mortified life practised whilst a child; her heroic submission to the will of God; her devotion to prayer; her praiseworthy efforts to prevent the circulation of improper pictures or books in her household. These are subjects for reflection and imitation. I will only add one word more. St. Frances beheld her guardian angel visible at her side: he instructed and consoled her. At the same time, he withdrew his presence whenever she committed a fault, and did not show himself until she had repented. You also have a guardian angel, though you do not see him. "Avoid, therefore, everything displeasing to him, lest he withhold his protection from you. St. Frances received a slap for not stopping an idle conversation: what do you deserve, not only for freely listening to, but also for taking part in, idle and, perhaps, even sinful and godless discourses? Let us beware. "Woe to us if the angels, irritated by our sins and heedlessness, refuse to let us share their company," says St. Bernard. Let us be careful not to offend them, and practice what is agreeable to them—as temperance, chastity, voluntary poverty, frequent prayer, truth, peace, and fraternal charity.

TENTH DAY OF MARCH.

THE FORTY MARTYRS OF SEBASTE.

In the time of Constantine the Great, the city of Sebaste was witness of a magnificent spectacle of Christian heroism, in the forty soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the Faith of Christ. Licinius, to whom Constantine had entrusted the government of a portion of the empire, was at first very friendly to the Christians, but afterwards played the part of a cruel tyrant towards them. He issued an edict to all the prefects to force the Christians to adore the pagan gods, and, in case of their refusal, to condemn them to death. Agricola, Governor of Armenia, published the imperial mandate and summoned the Christians before him. The first to answer this summons were forty brave soldiers of the garrison of Sebaste. They openly proclaimed themselves followers of Christ and ready to suffer tortures, and even death, rather than deny their faith. Lysias, their general, endeavored by praising their former bravery, by promising them imperial favors and rewards, and finally by threatening them with an ignominious death, to turn them from their holy purpose of remaining disciples of the Crucified. The Christian heroes, however, fearlessly declared, that in a case where the honor of the King of kings and their own eternal welfare were at stake, they disregarded promises and threats, and scorned the favor or displeasure of the Emperor.

The Governor, provoked to anger, ordered the holy confessors to be bound with chains and cast into dungeons. He called them again and again before his tribunal, but, finding them always firm in their faith, inflicted cruel tortures on them and sent them back to prison. During their confinement, they exhorted each other to perseverance with these words: "We have borne so many hardships, so often exposed our lives in the service of an earthly sovereign, and in defence of our country: shall we do less for the King of Heaven and in behalf of our own souls?" In this manner they encouraged each other, and begged of the Lord that He would strengthen them in their impending martyrdom. They employed a portion of their time in singing the Divine praises. Our Saviour did not fail to assist and console His servants. In a vision, He addressed them in these terms: "The beginning is good, but he only who perseveres to the end will be saved." Shortly after this, sentence was pronounced on the forty martyrs, and immediately carried out.

They were first struck on the mouth with stones, and at night-fall conducted, in the middle of winter, to a frozen lake. They were condemned to sit there, naked, until death should put an end to their sufferings. There was also a hot bath in readiness, at a neighboring house, for those who should chance to go over to the service of the idols.

As soon as the Christian soldiers reached the lake, they took off their clothes and went out on the ice. Here they continued their praises of God, earnestly asking for the Divine assistance. "We are forty going on the ice," said they, "grant, O merciful Lord, that forty also may be crowned, and that none lose his crown. It is a favored number, which Thou hast ennobled by Thy holy fast. Elias sought and found God by a fast of forty days." Near the martyrs were stationed the guards to watch that no one should escape. Some hours had already passed; the heroes still persevered in glorifying God by their chants, and continued to offer supplications to the throne of the Most High: the guards, however, had fallen asleep: the prison-keeper alone was watching. He suddenly beheld the martyrs environed by a shining light, and angels descending from heaven with magnificent crowns in their hands, which they placed on the heads of the soldiers. He remarked, however, that only thirty-nine were crowned. He said to himself: "There are forty Christians on the lake; where is the crown of the other one?" The mystery was soon solved. One of the number, unable to endure the cold any longer, had crawled to the bath, and by this act, denied his faith. But God did not suffer this inconstancy to go unpunished, for the wretch died soon after entering the bath, losing his life and precipitating himself into the flames of hell; thus, by seeking to escape short sufferings, he also forfeited the heavenly reward due to perseverance. The thirty-nine were much grieved at this desertion, but they were gladdened by seeing the prison-keeper himself filling up their number again. For, reflecting on what he had just witnessed, he concluded that the faith of the Christians must be the only true one. Awaking the guards, he related to them his vision, and cried out, in a loud voice: "I also am a Christian, and will live and die with the Christians." He stripped off his garments, and, joining the martyrs on the lake, begged them to petition the Lord to bestow a similar crown on him. Their prayer was heard, for an angel came down from heaven with the crown.

At the break of day, everything that had occurred in the night was reported to the Governor. He immediately ordered the forty martyrs to be drawn out of the lake, their limbs to be broken with clubs, and the bodies to be thrown into the fire.

The icy water had deprived all of life, with the exception of one, who, being younger, was possessed of greater power of endurance. The name of this one was Melitho. His mother, seeing him still alive, said to him: "Persevere only a little longer, my child; Jesus is standing at the gate of heaven, hastening to your assistance." In the mean while, the bodies of the other confessors had been thrown into a cart and were carried to the burning pile. The mother, perceiving that her son was left behind, in the hope of bringing him over to the worship of the idols, took him on her shoulders, in order to place him on the cart or on the pile. Whilst carrying him, she encouraged and exhorted him to persevere by considerations on the shortness of life and the eternity of the reward. The courageous youth, whilst listening to the words of his mother, gave up the ghost. The pious mother, however, completed her task, and laid the corpse with those of the other martyrs, that he might be united, even in death, with his companions. St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and many other holy fathers, delivered sermons, full of instruction and unction, on these holy martyrs.

ADMONITION.

Before coming to the usual considerations, I will present to the reader the thoughts which arose in my mind at the reading of these incidents. These martyrs were all soldiers, and we find frequent mention, in the Calendar of Saints, of holy martyrs who followed the profession of arms. They underwent the most cruel tortures for the sake of Christ. But for such deeds of heroism, great virtue was necessary. Hence the folly of those who say that a soldier cannot live piously and save his soul. Thousands of martyrs were soldiers, and numberless holy confessors, had formerly been warriors. This is an undeniable proof, that it is not impossible to lead a Christian life in camp and obtain salvation. Thus, St. John the Baptist did not advise the soldiers, who asked him "What was necessary for salvation?" to forsake the army, but insisted on this, that they be satisfied with

their pay, treat no one ill, calumniate no one, etc., as it is written in St. Luke. A soldier, solicitous about his salvation, must apply himself to the faithful observance of the Commandments of God and the Church, avoid sins, especially those common in the army—for example, blasphemy, cursing, excess in drinking and gaming, robbing and cheating, and, above all, the abominable vice of impurity—of which not only the deeds but also the words and thoughts are to be shunned. He must likewise be on his guard against idleness and wicked companions, and entice no one to sin. He should be zealous for good works, devoutly say his night-prayers early in the evening, frequent the Sacraments, be eager to hear the Word of God, obey his officers, and faithfully serve the master to whom he has sworn fidelity. Moreover, he should patiently bear the many and great

hardships attached to his condition, out of love for God, offering them up in a spirit of penance for past offences. A soldier has often a more severe life than a Priest, even in the most austere religious order.

He can gain exceeding great merit, if he makes use of the opportunities. Every Christian soldier, by observing these lessons, will be sanctified, and his salvation will be assured.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The sad example of the apostate is worthy of consideration. A Christian, who had already suffered much for Christ's sake, becomes a traitor at the last moment. To escape a short pain, and enjoy a small relief, he forfeits everlasting joys and falls into the pit of hell. In the first picture, behold the weakness and inconstancy of man; learn from it to call daily upon the Almighty for His grace and strength; and do not trust too much in yourself. In the second picture, you see yourself. Often, for a sinful gratification, a slight gain, or to avoid a little trouble, you have grievously offended the Divine Majesty and exposed your soul to eternal perdition. Of course you hope to escape this danger by penance; but do you imagine that this apostate expected to die in his sin? I believe that he intended to repent and come back to the fold of Christ. His denial, probably, was only by words, in the expectation of repenting of his fault at some future time. His hopes were vain. He perished miserably in his sin; there was no time of repentance for him. May not this be your lot also? May not your hopes also be delusive? Think well on this, and never wilfully expose yourself to such a danger. Consider, further, how this soldier must pine, when he reflects on the meanness of the comfort for which he exchanged an eternity of bliss. The same useless mourning will be your share, if you lose

heaven—not perhaps by apostasy, but by some other mortal sin. Meditate seriously on this subject, and be watchful, that you may not one day undergo a similar experience.

II. Impress deeply on your soul the conclusion which the holy martyrs reached: "If we have borne so many hardships for an earthly sovereign and for our country, why should we not do the same for the King of Kings and for our eternal welfare?" You, perhaps, put up with many inconveniences; you work or suffer for the sake of some person, or for a small profit. Now, why do you refuse to suffer for God, who promises you an eternal and immense reward? Animate yourself with the thought of the greatness of the Master you serve, and of the infinite recompense promised. The mother of St. Melitho said: "The pains are short, the joys endless." Call to mind these words, when you feel discouraged in your work or trials. "Rejoice, my soul," said St. Chrysologus; "for the afflictions you undergo are transitory, while the glory awaiting you is eternal." The same holy father, speaking of the recompense which God bestows on His faithful servants, and of that which Satan confers on his followers, says: "Behold how the devil rewards the services rendered to him! Death terminates life, and begins the torture. But the servants of Jesus despise death, and receive eternal bliss for their re-

compense." The poor renegade deserved the former, the firm and persevering soldiers obtained the latter. Whose service do you choose? For whose love will you labor and suffer? To whom do you offer up your works and toils? "I," says the Prophet David, "speak my works to the King"—that is, to God, the King of kings—"to Him I dedicate all my labors; whatsoever I do or suffer, it is for His love and honor, and my sole aim is to serve Him" (Ps. xlv.). The memory of the great reward promised to the faithful servant urged him to say this, as he himself tells us: "I have inclined my heart to do Thy

justifications forever, for the reward" (Ps. cxviii.). Imitate his example. Offer all to the Lord, and serve Him with zeal and joy. "Serve ye the Lord with gladness," says David (Ps. xcix.). A servant works with joy when he is promised great wages. Your pay is infinitely great: serve God, then, with joy; but also persevere to the end. If, like the poor wretch, you desert the service of Jesus and enter that of Satan, you need hope for no reward in heaven. For Truth itself has said: "But he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. x.).

ELEVENTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. EULOGIUS, PRIEST AND MARTYR.

The Roman Martyrology mentions, during the year, five Saints who bore the name of Eulogius. Two of these were Bishops, the others glorious martyrs. The Saint whose festival is commemorated to-day was a Priest of Cordova, the ancient capital of Spain. His parents were of the highest nobility and very wealthy, but also, what is worthy of praise, of very great virtue. Kindness and charity to the poor distinguished the Saint as a child, whilst his delight consisted in praying before the altar of St. Zoilus, serving at Mass, and frequent intercourse with the servants of God. In his studies, his aim was to acquire knowledge, in order to prepare himself to advance the glory of God and benefit his neighbor. His success was so remarkable, that he was considered one of the most learned men of his day. Having received Holy Orders, he became a model for Priests; his life was so pure as to excite even the admiration of the infidel Moors and Saracens, who then ruled over Cordova. Towards his body he was most rigorous, severely chastising it by fasts, watching, and other penances. Prayer was his principal occupation, whilst, for idleness, play, or useless conversations or employments, unbecoming the sacred character of a Priest, he found no leisure. He faithfully discharged the duties of charity towards his neighbor, as well for the body as the soul.

A severe persecution against the Clergy arose at this time in Cordova, occasioned, in a great measure, by the Bishop. Many Priests, and among them St. Eulogius, were cast into prison by the Moorish King. The Saint knew how to profit by the opportunity. His devotion to prayer was as fervent and continued here, as it had been out of prison; he encouraged his fellow-sufferers, not only by words, but also by a book which he composed and entitled "Exhortations to Martyrdom." He relates the many trials and torments suffered by the Saints for the defence of the true Faith, and extols their heroism under these sufferings. He then proceeded to give a touching instruction to those doomed to suffer for a like cause: the means adapted to obtain perseverance in the true Faith, together with motives restraining them from apostasy in the midst of the most frightful tortures. The reading of this book was of wonderful assistance to those who were soon to be put to death for Christ. Eulogius, however, was set free, and immediately returned to his labor of love—the salvation of souls. The unworthy Bishop, whose fear of the Saracens had done so much injury to Christianity, and whose course of life was by no means edifying, commanded the Saint to accompany him to church, as was the custom in those days, and celebrate the Divine Mysteries in his presence. Eulogius refused compliance with this request, lest he might appear to approve the conduct of the Bishop, to the great scandal of the faithful. The prelate threatening to inflict ecclesiastical censures on him, the holy Priest secretly withdrew to France.

After a lapse of time, he returned to Cordova, just at the moment when the King of the Moors was striving to root out Christianity from the kingdom. Many of the Christians had sought safety in flight, others, fearing the torments, had forsaken the Faith; others, again, began to waver in their resolution; and there remained but few who were determined to sacrifice their lives rather than their belief in Jesus Christ. Eulogius made most strenuous efforts to remedy this sad state of affairs. He sought out the wandering sheep, and led them back to the true fold. He encouraged and strengthened the wavering, by those lessons which he had composed while in prison. He exhorted the others to persevere in their determination to die for Christ. Success was the reward of his zeal. All the inhabitants of the city, who had once sworn fidelity to Christ, kept their promise inviolable. Neither threats nor promises, neither sufferings nor tortures, could induce them to apostatize;—nay, even in the heat of the persecution, many infidels joyfully embraced the true Faith, with the ardent desire of shedding their blood in its defence.

Amongst the latter was Leocritia, a virgin of noble descent.

She had been secretly baptized, and her parents, on discovering this, subjected her to harsh treatment, and exerted all their influence to force her to abandon the Faith. Escaping from her home, she placed herself under the guidance of St. Eulogius. He received her into his house, and concealed her in various hiding places, so that she might escape the raging wolves seeking her destruction. For a time she succeeded in eluding her persecutors, but at last, her parents traced her, and discovered her engaged in prayer with the Saint. The holy Priest was dragged before the judge and accused by the parents of having sheltered their disobedient child, concealed her, and encouraged her to persist in her obstinacy. Eulogius was called upon to answer the accusations. His reply was: "I am a Priest of God: it is my duty to care for Christians, and to point out to all the right road to heaven. I have done only this for Leocritia." The unjust judge did not admit this defence, but condemned Eulogius to be cruelly scourged. During this torture the Saint called out to the executioners: "Spare yourselves; your blows are ineffectual; for, with scourges you can neither separate my soul from the body, nor my heart from Christ. But even if my soul should leave this mortal body, it shall still be united to Jesus." He proclaimed, in a loud voice, that Christ was the true God, and that Mahomet was a false prophet. This so provoked the judge that he gave orders to lead the Saint to the place of execution and behead him without delay.

The holy martyr praised God and joyfully proceeded to the appointed place, exhorting all he met on the road to confess Christ and renounce Mahomet, who was a deceiver and false prophet. Eulogius, in return for his exhortations, received a smart blow in the face from an infidel. No complaint escaped him, but he simply offered the other cheek; and the Mahometan struck him a still fiercer blow. On reaching the scaffold, he renewed his act of faith in the Divinity of Christ, and kneeling down, he lifted his eyes to heaven, and joyfully received the death-blow, in the year 859. Four days later, Leocritia, after enduring divers sufferings and torments for the same faith, followed him to heaven.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Eulogius devoted as much time to prayer in the prison as he had formerly done. Many persons, when they meet with misfortunes or persecutions, are disgusted with prayer

and good works, or neglect them entirely out of carelessness and sloth. This is very wrong. In such circumstances, the help of God is especially necessary; and prayers

should rather be protracted than shortened. The same course ought to be adopted when prayer is tiresome or loathsome. We must, then, employ violence against ourselves, instead of yielding to this feeling of weariness. Our Divine Saviour, in His sorrow and agony, did not neglect prayer, but continued and repeated it. The Saints followed His example. Do the same. How can you expect to receive help from above, in your trials, if you act otherwise? How can you resist the injurious effects of the ever-increasing sadness? Whence can you draw strength to struggle against the temptations with which the sad and downcast are assailed by the devil? As soon as Jesus, in His agony, had protracted his prayer, an angel came down from heaven and strengthened Him, to teach us that, in sadness, prayer must be our refuge, if we desire to obtain strength and consolation from on high. Listen to the advice of St. Bernard: "When you find that sadness or sloth overpowers you, do not cease praying, but call upon God until you feel yourself encouraged and fortified." If you do not experience it after the first petition, or even after the second, do not lose courage, but continue your supplication until the Lord has heard you.

II. Eulogius was stern towards himself. He was averse to indolence, allowed himself no relaxation in playing, or useless conversation, nor anything that is pleasing to the senses. On the contrary, he chastised his flesh, by fasting, watching, and the like mortifications. This is the practice of the Saints, such their treatment of the body. How dif-

ferent the method which the children of the world pursue! They seek only for comforts, and most carefully shun whatever is uncomfortable or painful. They consider the voluntary mortifications of the devout as the effects of simplicity, and deride and despise them. But what do they gain by this in the other world? Only sufferings and tortures for their bodies, whilst the body of a Saint will rejoice in the splendor of eternal glory. The bodies of the beatified will be transported with heavenly bliss; the bodies of the damned will be racked with everlasting torments. "The more you spare yourself now," says Thomas à Kempis, "and yield to your flesh, the greater will be your penance hereafter." What must you do to escape this fate? Follow the advice given by the same venerable author: "Chastise your body by penance." Refrain from forbidden lusts, do not seek too much diversion and comfort. Observe the prescribed fasts and the weekly abstinences, even though they be painful to you. Do not let the heat or the cold, or any other annoyance, keep you from anything belonging to the Divine Service. Occasionally, also, practice some voluntary penances. Chastise your body by mortification; otherwise God will inflict chastisement on you in the next world; and how severe will it not be! "There, one hour of suffering will be more sharp than a hundred years here spent in the most rigid penance," says the author of the "Following of Christ." Be solicitous now, and repent. Do penance here, that you may enjoy eternal repose hereafter.

TWELFTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT, POPE.

St. Gregory, on account of his extraordinary sanctity and wisdom, as well as his many and illustrious deeds, surnamed the Great, was born at Rome. His father was Gordianus, a Senator of Rome, and his mother, Silvia, a noble and virtuous matron. He applied himself in his youth with ardor to the study of Divine and human letters, and soon acquired so great a reputation for learning that the Emperor appointed him Prefect of Rome. Reflecting, however, on the many dangers which are connected with positions of honor and trust, he resigned the Prefectship, after having wisely and justly fulfilled its onerous duties for a length of time. After the decease of his father, he built and established six monasteries in Sicily, and founded a seventh in Rome, in his own palace. The rest of his patrimony he divided among the poor and the clergy. He then entered the monastery he had erected at Rome, and subjected himself to the obedience of the Abbot, under the rule of St. Benedict. The many bright examples of his virtue caused the monks, on the death of the Abbot, to elect him as their Superior.

He most zealously promoted religious discipline, not so much by words as by example. His rigid fasts produced an incurable weakness of the stomach. On one occasion, having kept the fast of Lent with his wonted austerity until the two last days, his strength completely failed him, and he believed himself unable to hold out any longer. However, he would not dispense himself; but enjoined a holy monk to obtain from the Lord the special favor of completing the fast, which God also granted. This severity was only towards his own body; to others he showed nothing but tenderness and compassion. An angel, as Gregory discovered later, in the guise of a shipwrecked merchant, came to him for alms. The Saint gave him six pieces of gold. The same merchant came a second and third time, declaring that he was in such great straits that so small a sum did not suffice for his needs. The charitable Gregory, having no more money, handed him a silver vase. Thereupon the angel disclosed himself to the Abbot and immediately vanished. After this incident, the Almighty bestowed on Gregory the gift of miracles, and he wrought very many.

Seeing on the market-place, one day, some fine, well-formed young men, sold into slavery, he inquired who they were. The

slave-dealer answered: "They are natives of England." "Are they English Christians?" demanded the holy Abbot. "No," replied the merchant, "they are pagans and idolaters." The holy man sighed and grieved that such nobly-formed men belonged to the Prince of Darkness. He went to the Pope, and begged him to dispatch missionaries to England to preach the Gospel and convert the English into angels and citizens of heaven. The holy Abbot offered himself, and the Pontiff gladly accepted him. Hardly, however, had Gregory set out with his companions, when the Holy Father was forced to recall him, because the people rose up and demanded the return of Gregory. Soon after this the holy Abbot, greatly against his will, was created Cardinal, and sent as Papal Nuncio to Constantinople, to ask for troops from the Emperor to defend Rome. His mission was successful; besides, he reconciled to the Church the patriarch Eutychius, who had fallen into heresy. On the death of the Pontiff, the unanimous voice of the clergy and the people called Gregory to the Papal throne. He opposed this choice, and, secretly leaving Rome, he hid himself in a cave. But a column of fire, resting over the cavern, made known his retreat, and he was compelled to yield to the will of God.

No pen can describe, no tongue can relate, what this indefatigable Pope accomplished for the glory of God and the good of Christendom during the twelve years of his reign. At the very beginning of his pontificate, he sought to appease the wrath of God, which was visiting Rome with a violent plague. He was the first to institute the penitential procession, at the head of which was carried the picture of the Blessed Virgin, painted by St. Luke. During the march he ordered the Litany of the Saints to be chanted. The Holy Father had the consolation of seeing the angel, on the Castle of St. Angelo, sheathing the drawn sword, as a mark that the pestilence was at an end. It was also then that choirs of angels were heard singing the hymn which the Church still uses during the Paschal time—"Regina Cœli"—

"O Queen of Heaven, rejoice;
For He whom thou didst deserve to bear
Is risen again, as He said:"

To which Gregory added: "Pray for us to God."

The Mother of Mercy had heard the prayer of her devoted people, and obtained, by her powerful intervention, the cessation of the plague. The holy Pontiff now turned all his attention to the discharge of his heavy duties. He regulated his palace and made it a perfect model of a Christian household. He

proceeded next to suppress vice, root out abuses, and introduce order into the offices of the Church. He preached daily to the faithful, exhorting them to lead a virtuous life. He exercised the greatest vigilance that none but pious and prudent pastors should have the care of souls and spiritual benefices entrusted to them.

Besides many beautiful ceremonies which he prescribed, we owe him also the "Plain Chant," which is still in use in the offices of the Church at the present day. There is no denying that this choral music possesses something grand and awe-inspiring, that it excites fervor and devotion during the Sacred Mysteries. Still the zeal of Gregory was not satisfied with his own personal efforts at Rome for the good of the universal Church. He sent letters to the Bishops of the various countries, exhorting them to be zealous and earnest in the discharge of their pastoral duties, praising their efforts, and punishing their faults. He strenuously opposed heretics wherever they might be found, energetically defended the rights of the Church, even against crowned heads, and brought about the conversion to the Catholic Faith of various lands. Amongst these was England. We saw that he was not permitted to proceed thither himself, but he deputed the holy monk Augustine, with some fellow-laborers, to work for the conversion of that country. Their preaching drew so many of the natives to the true Faith, that in a short space several dioceses were erected. It was owing to this solicitude and care that Gregory has been called the Apostle of England.

To the poor and oppressed the Pope was a tender father. At his table might be seen daily twelve beggars or strangers. One day there were twelve seated at the table, when he met a thirteenth, who had not been invited by the deacon of the Pope. This was an angel, as Gregory discovered afterwards, and the same who had formerly sought alms as a shipwrecked merchant. At another time, when the Pontiff, according to his custom, was washing the feet of a poor man, the latter suddenly disappeared. The following night Christ visited Gregory, and spoke these words: "Thou hast been charitable to me in the poor, but to-day thou hast exercised thy charity to me in person." His officers had been instructed to keep a list of the poor of Rome, and the Pope sent them relief, according to their wants. He gave orders to the officials in and out of the city to take special care of the poor. Priests and others, numbering three thousand, received support from the Sovereign Pontiff at Rome, and, in his judgment, the city of Rome had escaped an assault from the enemy by the prayers and works of penance of these holy persons.

But, passing over everything else, it is surprising that Gregory,

amidst his many occupations and duties, could find time to compose the profound books which are still extant; for he was continually sick, being afflicted with a weakness of the stomach, and subject to painful attacks of gout. By the recollection of his sins (though they were only venial) he alleviated his sufferings and animated himself to patience, as he wrote to the holy Bishop Leander. During the last years of his life he was bedridden. Still he was ever vigilant and careful in the duties of his exalted station. He watched over the conduct of his officers, and occupied himself with the affairs of the Church. Reclining or sitting on his couch, he dictated to his deacon his letters and books, full of unction. This deacon testified that on these occasions a white dove was perched on the head of the Saint, and whispered, as it were, into Gregory's ears what he was to dictate. In his pain he never ceased to praise God, and comforted himself with the example of Job and other Saints, but especially with that of our dying Saviour. After having endured much suffering and tribulation, as also persecution, this holy Pontiff closed his mortal career at the age of sixty, and took his departure for a world from which troubles and ills are excluded. His happy death occurred in the year 604.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The judgment of Gregory about religious orders and monks was altogether at variance with the opinions of men of the world at the present day. He considered them as protectors of the city and public benefactors, and treated them accordingly. He was convinced that God, who would have spared Sodom and Gomorrhah for the sake of ten just men, now restrains His wrath on account of the persons consecrated to His service, because of these many are holy and just. Many pretended Catholics look upon Priests, and especially those who, shut in a monastery, devote themselves exclusively to the service of God, as a useless, or even injurious, burden on the commonwealth. Instead of contributing to their support, they covet their possessions unlawfully, or even plan to deprive

them of what is their rightful property. Nay, were it in their power, they would not hesitate to drive the monks from their quiet homes, to-day rather than to-morrow. But is this the conduct—I do not say of a Christian—but of a reasonable man? Are these astute men wiser and more sagacious than the heaven-inspired Pope Gregory? Are they wiser than the many holy Fathers who, in their writings, so highly extol the religious orders and so powerfully defend them against their foes? Are they better judges than the saintly Bishops and Popes, the pious nobles, kings, and emperors, who invited the monks into their dioceses and dominions, founded monasteries for them, and took them under their own special protection? Can it be denied that these religious communities have produced and

still develop Saints, who, by their virtues and prayers, work incalculably more benefit to the State than these foolish and wicked men who scoff at and despise the monks? Do not these scoffers prove themselves more hurtful to the State by their impiety? Shun these skeptics, and thank God for having blessed His Church with religious orders who devote themselves to the salvation of souls, and, at the same time appeasing the anger of God by their virtues and prayers, avert many well-deserved chastisements from their country. Thus the priests and monks do far more for the good of the State than the infidels and bad Catholics imagine.

II. St. Gregory did not exempt himself from the fast of Lent, though he certainly had sufficient reasons, and would have committed no sin. Many, too, easily believe, that they are unable to fast: they pretend that their stomach is too weak to fast or digest the Lenten food; that their health is endangered thereby; that it makes them sick, and a thousand similar pleas. Hence they easily dispense themselves from fasting and abstinence, or importune their spiritual superior for a dispensation, and perhaps obtain it: after going to an unscrupulous physician and making false representations, they have begged or purchased a certificate of exemption. Now mark, dear reader, wherever there is a valid reason, neither Almighty God nor our holy Mother, the Church, imposes on us the obligation of the fast or abstinence. This

reason may be a severe illness, or some other circumstance, as the Catechism teaches. If the alleged cause does not exist, or is founded only on a disordered fancy or sensuality—on a slight inconvenience or indisposition—neither your own dispensation nor that granted by the spiritual authority will excuse you before the tribunal of a just Judge. It is quite different when fasting or abstinence is impossible, and when it is only troublesome. Fasting was not instituted for bodily comfort, otherwise it would not be a penance. Before saying that you are unable to fast or abstain, or that it injures your health, first make the trial, and then judge. Do not blindly trust your fancy or sensuality. We are able to bear more than we imagine, provided we have a determined will. If the motives alleged by you in procuring the dispensation are false or ill-grounded, you will be responsible to the Lord; and the same punishment of hell fire which is due to those who wilfully violate fasts and abstinence awaits you also. The highest spiritual authority here below may be deceived, but can you impose upon the All-wise, who penetrates the inmost recesses of the heart? “Shall He be deceived as a man with your deceitful dealings?” asks holy Job (Job xiii.) Do not believe it, for Wisdom itself says: “Nor do I judge according to the look of man: for man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart” (I. Kings, xvi.).

THIRTEENTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. EUPHRASIA, VIRGIN.

St. Euphrasia, whose feast is celebrated to-day, was born at Constantinople, in the time of Theodosius the Elder. Her father, Antigonus, was Imperial Councillor, and, on account of his virtue and prudence, was in high standing with the Emperor. Her mother, also called Euphrasia, acquired the homage of the whole court by her sincere piety. After the birth of their daughter, the parents resolved to practice perfect continence, in order to devote themselves more entirely to the service of God. The pious mother made it her chief duty to impress deeply on the innocent heart of the young girl those Christian truths which produce the love and fear of God, the hatred of sin, and the practice of virtue. Hardly had the child reached her seventh year, when her father was called from this world. The Emperor Theodosius had so highly esteemed him, that he offered to supply his place, and take a father's care of the orphan. He selected one of his most faithful courtiers, to whom Euphrasia was to be betrothed, and, in riper years, to be married. He also proposed to the mother, who was still young, rich, and beautiful, a second marriage. She courteously refused the offer, and, to be free from further importunities on this head, repaired to Egypt, under pretence of looking after some property, but in reality to live in retirement.

Arriving in Egypt, she visited the many monasteries scattered over that country, and bestowed munificent alms on them. One monastery, however, pleased her more than the rest; in it one hundred and thirty virgins lived in the greatest poverty and sanctity. She, with her daughter, was a frequent visitor there, and delighted in conversing with the sisters on spiritual matters. Having remained there on one occasion till evening, when she was about to return home, the child refused to accompany her, and expressed a wish to remain with the nuns. The Abbess replied that no one was allowed to stay unless she vows to serve God in perpetual virginity. Euphrasia, inspired by the spirit of God, ran to a crucifix; and casting herself on her knees, cried out: "I consecrate myself to my Saviour forever, and desire to live and die a pure oblation in this monastery." The Superioress praised the fervor of the child, but represented to her the austere life which she would have to embrace, and that her tender age was unfit to bear this burden. Euphrasia was undaunted, and declared herself ready to submit to everything. The mother

stood motionless for a while, and regarded the spectacle with astonishment. She was also convinced that the resolution of her daughter was not a childish caprice, but really an inspiration of the Holy Ghost. She therefore gladly resigned herself to the will of heaven, and sacrificed to God her dearest treasure on earth. She then departed, her heart full of Divine consolation, and continued her life of solitude and holiness to the end.

Euphrasia, notwithstanding her age of seven years, was placed among the nuns, and clad in their habit. From the very first day her fervor and devotion filled all who witnessed them with admiration. Her powers of understanding were in advance of her years, and it was evident that the Omnipotent had chosen this delicate flower to prove that it is possible even for a child to be pious and holy. Euphrasia, on reaching her twelfth year, ate but once a day, and that in the evening. A sister reproached her with hypocrisy on this account. The holy child was not in the least offended at this, but, falling on her knees, she begged pardon, and besought the nun to pray to God for her. There was no work too severe, no task too low, which she did not covet and perform with the greatest joy. She swept the cells, arranged the beds, carried wood and water to the kitchen,—in a word, she did all that usually falls to the lot of the humblest servant with joy and alacrity, as if she had been born only to serve. With all this toil she never allowed her body any relaxation. She constantly wore a rough haircloth, and slept on the ground covered with sackcloth. All the time she could spare from her work she devoted to prayer, as far as obedience permitted it. The Evil Spirit, hoping to diminish and destroy her fervor, assailed her with the most violent temptations. She always struggled courageously, and, with the Divine aid, was ever victorious. She declared that she experienced wonderful relief from her temptations whenever she disclosed them to the Abbess.

I pass over many other things which are related in her life, but I cannot omit the following: it was her wonderful constancy and her contempt for the things of this world. As soon as the Emperor had been informed of the decease of her mother, he wrote to Euphrasia, reminding her of her previous betrothal, and inviting her to court to complete the marriage; whilst he renewed his promise of the Imperial favor and friendship. Euphrasia smiled at the news, and, without long reflection, wrote to him, with her own hand: "I have chosen a heavenly Spouse, and dedicated myself entirely to Him. I can and shall prefer Him to any earthly Bridegroom, who may die even to-day. My most humble prayer is, that your Majesty distribute all my wealth among the poor, the orphans, and the churches; free the slaves of my house-

hold, generously reward my former servants, remit all debts to my creditors, that I may serve God with greater peace of conscience.

The Emperor admired the holy grandeur of the virgin, and punctually executed her wishes. The holy nun, on the other hand, persevered in her fervor, and God recompensed her by the gift of miracles, the report of which soon spread over the whole country.

A sorrow-stricken mother brought her little son, who was deaf, dumb, and palsied, to the convent, earnestly beseeching the sisters to offer prayers to God for the recovery of her child. The Abbess commanded Euphrasia to take the child into the church and pray for it. The holy virgin obeyed, and, signing it with the saving mark of redemption, said: "My child, may the God who created you restore you to health;" and immediately the boy arose, healed from his triple infirmity. For a number of years there dwelt in the monastery a poor woman possessed by the devil. She was bound with chains; still her paroxysms of fury were so violent that it was dangerous to approach her. Euphrasia was charged by the Abbess to provide her with food and to supply all her wants. The holy sister obeyed. At first, the poor unfortunate wretch made threatening faces and gestures, but gradually calmed down, and became as gentle as a lamb. On remarking this, the Abbess enjoined on Euphrasia to pray to the Lord for her deliverance from this wretched state of slavery. Euphrasia, always obedient, arming herself with fasting, prayer, and confidence in God, commanded the Evil Spirit to depart from this creature of the Almighty, and he was forced to surrender his long-held possession. But, a short time previously, quite an extraordinary event took place. Germana, one of the sisters, yielded to envy on account of the veneration bestowed on Euphrasia, arising out of the behavior of the possessed woman towards the Saint. Germana, thinking that she could have the same power over the woman, begged leave of the Abbess to replace Euphrasia in her duties towards the unfortunate victim. She advanced boldly into the room, when she brought the meal; but hardly had she entered when the frenzied creature sprung upon her, hurled her to the ground, and maltreated her to such a degree that had it not been for Euphrasia, who hastened to her help, Germana would have lost her life. This incident only increased the respect and homage of the others for the saintly virgin, who humbled herself still more before God, and considered herself the least of all the sisters.

When Euphrasia was thirty years old, Jesus, in a vision, showed the Abbess the glorious crown which Euphrasia had

merited, and which would soon be awarded her. The Superioress was overpowered by the certainty of soon losing this greatest treasure of the monastery. However, obeying the Divine mandate, she informed Euphrasia of her approaching death. She was terrified at this message, because she thought her fervor in the service of God too imperfect, and that her sins required greater expiation. Now, she never had sullied her baptismal innocence by mortal sin, and her ardor in serving the Lord was never relaxed. She soon recovered from this fear, and, submitting to the Divine will, she approached the Holy Table, and, a fever attacking her, she went, after twenty-four hours' suffering, to receive the crown prepared for her in heaven. Her spiritual mistress, Julia, besought Euphrasia to remember, at the throne of the Almighty, both herself and the Abbess, and to entreat the heavenly Spouse to summon them soon to the celestial marriage feast. The Saint kept her promise, and the two died soon after.

(*PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.*)

I. Euphrasia had passed her childhood, as well as her more advanced years, in innocence and purity; and yet she does penance; she fasts rigorously, long before reaching the required age, far more exactly than the Church demands. Prayer occupied every leisure moment. Her rich patrimony she distributed among the poor. Thus she united prayer, fasting, and alms deeds. Perhaps your conscience warns you that you are not as innocent as this holy virgin; perchance even you have committed grievous sins. If such is the case, you have abundant reasons for treating your body with severity. If you do not fast out of devotion, at least observe the fasts prescribed by the Church. That your fasting may be acceptable to the Lord and beneficial to your soul, avoid sin, practice good works, but especially prayer and almsgiving. St. Augustine teaches us the first with these words: "We abstain from food in order that we may abstain still more from sin. For what will it benefit us to refrain

from what is sometimes permitted, if we indulge in what is always forbidden? If we, therefore, wish to fast rightly, and abstain from food, let us, above all, avoid sin and vice." In regard to the other point, during Lent, and on other fast days, we must be more assiduous in prayer, and more charitable to the poor. Thus we shall join together prayer, fasting, and alms. The holy Scriptures and the Fathers tell us that these three good works are most acceptable in the sight of God, and very profitable to man. "Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold," said the angel Raphael to Tobias (Tob. xii.). "God is more pleased with your fast, if you bestow the fruit of your abnegation on the hungry," says St. Gregory. In similar terms does St. Isidore speak of prayer: "That fast is perfect where the exterior man fasts while the interior prays. By fasting; prayer ascends to heaven more easily." Gather some practical benefit from these reflections.

II. St. Euphrasia always experienced great relief in her temptations when she frankly exposed them to the Abbess. Are you vexed by temptations? Reveal them, what kind soever they be, to your confessor, and follow his directions. It is very dangerous for one inexperienced in the ways of virtue to conceal his temptations. St. Cassian says: "The devil has hopes of conquering as long as his plans and plots are not revealed to the spiritual director; but as soon as they are disclosed, he takes flight." St. Ignatius compared Satan to a seducer, endeavoring to lead astray the daughter of a virtuous man; for his main object is that perfect secrecy veil his doings. If the heedless daughter follows this advice of keeping silence about what he says, the seducer will soon succeed and accomplish her ruin; but if, on the contrary, the daughter has no secrets from her mother, the experience of her parent will instruct her how to act in the danger, and the profligate wretch, finding his

plans known, will remain away and leave the daughter in peace. Open your conscience to your confessor, lay bare all the temptations by which you are assailed. You do not hesitate to show to a physician the most hidden disease of the body. Why should you be ashamed to expose the state of your soul to a spiritual physician, especially as it is infinitely more important? He is able to assist you much more than the doctor in your physical ailments. "What a physician does not know, he cannot heal," writes St. Jerome. In the same manner, if you do not confess your temptations and wicked inclinations to your spiritual guide, how can he help and guide you in the path of virtue? "He that hideth his sins shall not prosper" (Prov. xxviii.)—that is, in the affairs of salvation. I repeat it to you, that unless you lay bare the most hidden thoughts and inclinations of your heart to your confessor, you will never be safely guided on the road to heaven.

FOURTEENTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. MATILDA, QUEEN.

The Roman Martyrology contains the following words for this day: "At Halberstad, in Germany, the demise of the blessed queen Matilda, mother of the Emperor Otho I., celebrated for her humility and patience." This Saint, whose feast we celebrate to-day, is not the renowned Countess of Tuscany, who transferred her dominions to the Holy See for the benefit of the Church, but a descendant of the famous Wittekind of Saxony. Her parents were the Count Theodoric, and Rheinhilda. She was entrusted in her childhood to a near relative, who was Abbess of Herrfort. After reaching the age of puberty, on account of her virtue and beauty, she was chosen for wife by Henry, surnamed the Fowler, who, in later years, was elected Emperor of Germany. She lived

with him in undisturbed love and peace, disposed him to the practice of virtue, and wrought much for the glory of God. She and her husband founded three imposing monasteries, in order that the Lord might have faithful servants in their realm and shower abundant blessings on it. She was also much interested in the foundation of the celebrated monastery at Quedlinburg; the church of which she chose as the last resting-place for herself and her spouse.

God blessed her with three sons: the eldest, Otho, who was afterwards made Emperor; the second, Henry, and the third, St. Bruno, who died Archbishop of Cologne. In her lofty station, Matilda was a bright example of all virtues, but especially distinguished for her Christian humility. She was amiable and friendly towards all, even to the lowest of her subjects; and no one was refused access to her. She patiently listened to all, offered them consolation, but principally interested herself in the poor and oppressed. Her husband, on his death-bed, thanked her for having dissuaded him from many acts of injustice, spurred him on to do good, and for having faithfully assisted him in word and deed. As soon as he expired, Matilda caused the Holy Sacrifice to be offered up for the repose of his soul; she assisted at the Mass, and shed copious tears. The death of her husband was a great affliction to the Empress; she, however, resigned herself to the holy will of God. She called her three children and admonished them, first, to honor and fear God, because the life and death of monarchs is in His hands; secondly, not to be too covetous of earthly honors and possessions, but to turn their attention to eternal glory, by considering how quickly and suddenly the things of this world pass away; thirdly, to cherish union and fraternal love among themselves.

In her widowhood, she augmented her fervor in the service of the Most High. She put on poor attire, loved retirement, shrank from all vain amusements, and spent most of her time in prayer and the reading of pious books. After a short sleep, she rose and repaired to the church, where she passed the remaining hours of the night in the contemplation of the Divine mysteries; and to conceal her visits to the Church, she returned to her apartments early in the morning before any one was awake. She never neglected to assist at the offices of the Church; she was untiring in the performance of works of mercy; her affection towards the suffering having greatly increased since the demise of her royal spouse. Providence was not satisfied with the good works she so zealously performed, but visited her with vexations and tribulation, in order to give her an opportunity of suffering for the love of God, and of trying her heroic patience. Otho, the

eldest son, having been chosen Emperor, began to treat his brother Henry very harshly. The mother counselled patience to the latter, but fraternal love to the former, and thus established peace between them. In return, however, the two sons agreed to persecute their good mother, who had given them only the most prudent advice. They caused her many vexations, accused her of taking money from the public treasury, and lavishing it on "the lazy monks and nuns." Matilda understood their object: the sons were anxious to be rid of her presence. Notwithstanding that her heart was so sorely troubled, still she preserved her peace of mind: she abandoned the court, and thus took away from her children the occasion of further sins.

She chose for her dwelling-place a spot in Westphalia, called Enghern. Here she redoubled her fervor in the service of God, and offered up many supplications for her sons, who had so grievously sinned against her. A just God did not allow this undutiful conduct to remain unpunished. Misfortunes succeeded one another, forcing Otho and Henry to acknowledge their sin: they sent messengers to their holy mother, asking pardon, and beseeching her to return to the court. Matilda would have preferred her solitude, still, to show that no malice rankled in her breast, and that she had forgotten the past injuries, came back to the court, and was again united to her sons. As her presence at court gave her many opportunities of relieving the oppressed, she continued to reside there. Her zeal in the service of the sick and the poor was untiring. * Jesus Christ, who considers the mercy shown the poor as done to Himself, frequently manifested to the world His Divine pleasure at the charity of Matilda. Amongst other facts, it is reported that several persons were cured by eating of the food prepared and sent by the Empress. God also opened the future to her eyes. She predicted to one of her grandsons his election to the Imperial dignity, and to another his elevation to the Episcopal chair of Mentz.

She knew the day of her death by revelation, and made it known to Nithburga, Abbess of the convent which she had founded at Nordburg. She therefore visited all the monasteries which she had erected, encouraging the monks and nuns to perseverance, and recommending herself to their prayers. She then repaired to Quedlinburg, which she had chosen as her resting-place, at the side of her husband. On her arrival, the disease from which she had been suffering during the year, suddenly became serious. She received the last Sacraments, and, strengthened by their reception, she divided her remaining goods among the poor. She then ordered a sackcloth to be

spread on the ground, on which she stretched herself, and scattered ashes on her head, saying: "It is not seemly that a Christian should die otherwise than in sackcloth and ashes." Signing herself with the cross, she fell asleep peacefully in the Lord, on the 14th March, 908, at the very hour she was wont to give alms to the poor.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The holy Empress was firmly persuaded that monks and religious draw down the blessings of God on a country. In this she agreed with Pope Gregory, of whom we spoke yesterday. This is the judgment of the Saints and of all fervent Catholics. This was the sentiment which pervaded the ages of faith. Only heretics and unbelievers, as well as bad Catholics, hate, despise, abuse, and persecute religious. With whom do you side? The holy queen richly endowed with revenues the monasteries which she had founded, in order that the monks and nuns might more freely devote their time to the worship and service of the Almighty. This liberality did not impoverish her, but her resources seemed to grow larger. What must they expect who, under various pretexts, by fraud or violence, deprive the clergy of their just dues, for their private benefit or for the state? The curse of an outraged God will descend on their possessions and be branded on their souls. The injuries heaped on His servants the Lord considers as done to Himself.

II. The mother yields to the wrath and wickedness of her children, and quits the Imperial Court: again she comes, at their invitation, to prove to the world that she has forgiven and forgotten their insults and injuries. These are two points for your imitation. When you remark

that anger is rising in your neighbor, yield to him, suppress the passion in your breast, keep silence, or answer in a spirit of meekness. By adopting the opposite course, you only make matters worse, and give occasion for more and greater sins. A small fire grows large by fanning; opposing an angry man, or addressing him with hard words, only enkindles the flames of anger. David says of himself: "I have set a guard to my mouth, when the sinner stood against me" (Ps. xxxviii.). He was silent when he noticed that his neighbor was angry, in order to prevent greater offences against the Divine Majesty. Follow this example whenever duty or conscience does not compel you to speak. In pardoning an injury, as the law of the Gospel requires, do it with a whole heart, after the example of St. Matilda. Show, by your external conduct, that you harbor no bad feelings in your bosom. To say: "I will indeed forgive, but I cannot forget; I wish my enemy no harm, neither will I do him any favor; I desire no revenge, but I will have no dealings with my foe," is not according to the teaching of our Saviour and His Saints. Consider how you would stand, if a merciful God, whom you have injured a thousand times more than your neighbor ever offended you, should adopt this course towards you. "Are you

willing that God should pardon you in this manner, not inflicting any evil on you, but also turning away	altogether from you?" says St. Chrysostom.
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FIFTEENTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. LONGINUS, SOLDIER, AND ST. LONGINUS, CENTURION, MARTYRS.

There are two Saints known in the Church by the name of Longinus. One of them was a common soldier, the other an officer. Trustworthy historians, as the Bollandists, relate the following facts of them. The first Longinus received orders from his captain to assist at the crucifixion of our Lord and the two thieves, and watch over the execution of the sentence. But, on account of the great Sabbath following the day of the crucifixion, the bodies of the crucified were to be taken down from their crosses. The two thieves, however, were still alive: their bones were broken, and by this torture they were put to death. The same indignity was to be inflicted on our Holy Redeemer, but, on a closer examination, it was found that He had already expired. To be certain, however, Longinus pierced the side of Jesus with a lance, and blood and water flowed from the wounded heart of Christ. Longinus was amazed at this, and, beginning to reflect upon all he had witnessed during the day, he was convinced that the crucified Jesus was something more than man. His belief was strengthened by the miracle of the Resurrection. The Apostles afterward completed his instruction in the doctrines of the Saviour, and he became one of the most zealous disciples of Jesus. He lived at Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, his native place, for twenty-eight years, converting many to the faith by his holy life.

Finally, he was, for this reason, accused before the Roman Governor Octavius. On his refusal to deny Christ and sacrifice to the idols, the Prefect ordered his tongue to be torn out and his teeth to be broken, hoping by this means to prevent the fervent disciple from preaching the Crucified. But the reverse happened. Longinus miraculously spoke without a tongue, represented to the tyrant the nothingness of the false gods, and the truth of the Divinity of Christ. He overturned and broke into pieces the idols which were brought before him; evil spirits were seen issuing from the idols and taking up their abode in the souls of the bystanding pagans, and subjecting them to cruel

sufferings. St. Longinus, pitying their wretched condition, freed them by his prayers and converted many on this occasion to the faith of Christ. Notwithstanding these prodigies, the Prefect was obdurate, and condemned the martyr to death by the sword. Some writers relate that the Prefect was struck blind during the martyrdom of Longinus, but recovered his sight whilst praying at the grave of the Saint; after which he was converted and led a Christian life.



The second Longinus was an officer in the army of Tiberius. He had been ordered by Pilate to attend the crucifixion with a detachment of soldiers, in order to prevent any disturbance. Having witnessed the many marvellous events during and after the crucifixion, and thinking over the words in the utterance of which Jesus had given up His spirit, he openly confessed that Christ was the son of God. The Evangelists, Matthew and Mark, testify to this. "And the centurion, who stood over against him, seeing that, crying out in this manner, He had given up the ghost, said: 'Indeed, this man was the Son of God'" (Mark xv.). The words of St. Matthew are these: "Now, the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: 'Indeed, this was the Son of God'" (Matt. xxvii.). For Longinus had learned that Jesus was crucified at the instigation of the Jews, because He had declared Himself to be the Son of God, which the High Priest and the whole assembly judged to be a blasphemy. Noticing the events which occurred at the death of Jesus, he did not doubt of the truth of the Saviour's words. He was the first of the pagans, to the eternal shame of the Jews, who believed in Christ, under the very shadow of the cross, and gave a glorious testimony to the Divinity of Jesus Christ, by exclaiming: "Indeed, this was the Son of God."

His faith was confirmed by the Resurrection; for, having been deputed to guard the tomb where our Lord was buried, until the third day, he was witness of the earthquake and of the descent of the angel who rolled the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre. He saw the angel sitting on the rock, and heard him inform the holy women of the Resurrection. At first, he and his subordinates were struck with terror at the aspect of the angel, but on recovery from his fright he departed and related all that had happened to the High Priests. The latter offered money to the guards, on condition of their spreading the report among the people that the disciples had come during the night and stolen

the body whilst the soldiers were asleep. St. Longinus would not enter into this agreement, but, resigning his military office, left Jerusalem and returned to his native country, where he fearlessly proclaimed the Resurrection of Christ and all the circumstances attending it. He spent his days at the paternal estate, near the city of Thiana, in the practice of all virtues. This was insupportable to the Jews, and they did not desist from their plots and intrigues until Pilate condemned Longinus to death as a deserter. Soldiers were immediately despatched to find out the Christian centurion and behead him.

The Almighty revealed to His faithful servant the near approach of death, and filled his soul with joy. He boldly went to meet the soldiers, who, being strangers to Longinus, inquired of him where they might find the centurion Longinus. The Saint answered: "Come, and I will bring you to him." He conducted them to his house, prepared a feast for them, and, after conversing with them in the most friendly manner, made himself known in these terms: "I am Longinus, the former centurion, for whom you are looking; execute your orders." The soldiers, struck with astonishment, refused at first to lay hands on their benefactor. But fearing, on the one hand, the vengeance of the Roman Governor, and exhorted, on the other, by Longinus to fulfil the commands they had received, they determined to kill him. The Saint, highly valuing the grace of martyrdom, put on a white robe, and, after praying, received, with the most lively sentiments of joy, the fatal blow. The soldiers brought the head of the Saint to Jerusalem, as a proof of their obedience. Pilate sent it to the Jews, but they cast it into a ditch outside of the city. The Lord, however, took the honor of Longinus under His own protection, and inspired a holy matron to pick up the outraged head and bury it with great reverence and honor with his body. As soon as the lady had been admonished by God, the Saint appeared to her and pointed out the spot where the head lay. We give this on the authority of the Bollandists.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. You are perhaps angry with Longinus for having opened the sacred side of Jesus, and inflicted a new wound. Others, also, are indignant at Judas for betraying and selling Jesus for such a paltry sum; or at the Jews, because they treated our Lord with so much cruelty, and</p>	<p>crucified Him. But why are you not angry and displeased with yourself for the many and great injuries you have heaped on Jesus by your sins? "We reproach Judas," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "and very often we commit his very crime, by offending Christ for the sake of</p>
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money or some momentary sinful pleasure." We accuse the Jews, and yet we despise, abuse, and crucify the Son of God over and over again by our sins. We are indignant at Longinus, who intended no harm to our Lord, and only wounded the dead body of Christ; whilst we offend a living Saviour and renew His wounds by our offences; and whilst we do this we are fully conscious of His Divinity, of which Longinus and the Jews were ignorant. Is not our crime far greater than that of Longinus and of the Jews? How will you stand, one day, before the face of the Judge, if you are not converted with Longinus, if you do not repent, do penance, and for the future cease offending the Saviour? "The wounds of Jesus, which you so often re-open by your sins, will be your accusers at the Day of Judgment," says St. Chrysostom; "and the precious blood which flowed from them will call down vengeance on you." "For," as St. Augustine writes, "Christ will hold up His sacred wounds and address to the reprobate these awful words: 'Behold the wounds you have inflicted! Do you recognize the side you have pierced? By you and for your sake was it opened, and yet you refused to enter . . . Depart from me into everlasting flames.'"

II. The holy blood and water, miraculously flowing from the side of Jesus, opened, for the soldier Longinus, the eyes of his soul, bringing him to the knowledge of Christ and confirming him in it unto death. The centurion Longinus was converted by witnessing the Passion, Death, and Resurrection. What effects do these events

produce in your soul? Is your heart more hardened than that of a pagan? Will you, after contemplating all that Jesus has suffered for you, still deliberate about your conversion? Where are your tears for all your past offences? Will you not henceforth love your Redeemer with your whole heart? Behold! He has shed His most precious blood, even to the very last drop, out of love for you. He has died the most ignominious death for your sake. Where is the man who loves you to such a degree, or who is willing or able to display such charity to you? Cast yourself at the feet of the Crucified and return endless thanks to Him for His infinite love. Ask pardon for your sins, and also grace and strength to love Him most perfectly. Venerate and kiss devoutly the sacred wounds, as unceasing proofs of the Divine love of Jesus towards you. Exclaim, with St. Ignatius: "Within Thy wounds hide me." Have a special devotion to the sacred wound of the side of Christ, beseeching Him, through the wound of His heart, and the precious blood flowing from it, to bestow on you a contrite heart, a heart filled with perfect love for your God. It is a well-established fact that many Saints, in their trials and temptations, had recourse to the sacred wounds of Christ for comfort and strength, which they infallibly obtained. "Whenever I perceive an improper thought arising," says St. Augustine, "I fly to the wounds of my Saviour . . . In all my tribulations, I have known no more powerful means than to take refuge in the wounds of Christ."

SIXTEENTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. HERIBERT, ARCHBISHOP OF COLOGNE.

St. Heribert, the first Archbishop of Cologne, sprung from the highest nobility, first saw the light of this world at Rheims. Even at his birth Heaven gave a sign of his future sanctity : an unusual brightness enveloped the paternal mansion for a length of time. In his early years, St. Heribert displayed uncommon ardor for true devotion and the higher studies. In his more advanced age, his progress in the sciences won for him the reputation of being among the most learned and skilled men of his day. Otho III., the Roman Emperor, heard of this, and, having tested him, consulted his judgment in every matter of importance. On the death of the Bishop of Wurzburg, the Emperor wished to raise him to the episcopal chair; the humble servant of God, however, so artfully pleaded his incapacity that his Majesty installed Henry, the brother of Heribert, in the vacant See. Heribert thought that now he was safe from ecclesiastical dignities; but, whilst accompanying the Emperor on his journey through Italy, Evergerus, the Bishop of Cologne, died. At the election for a successor, a division arose between the clergy and laity. The clergy had chosen Wezelin, whom the burghers refused to accept. Wezelin, desirous to preserve peace, addressed the clergy and laymen, and in a loud voice declared he did not desire this dignity unless their choice was unanimous, and to prove his sincerity, he was going to propose to them a man beloved by God and the Emperor, who was already well known to them by his extraordinary gifts. He himself deemed him the one worthy of so renowned a See.

As soon as the name of Heribert was mentioned, all, with one voice, agreed, crying out: "Heribert is our Bishop; aye, it is Heribert." The Emperor, who was at Beneventum, was quickly informed by a special messenger of this wonderful election; He expressed his satisfaction at this news, and announced to Heribert, who was at Ravenna, on business for his imperial master, his elevation to the episcopal chair of Cologne. Excuses and representations were of no avail; he was obliged to submit, because in this unanimous election he recognized the will of God. He journeyed to Rome to receive the canonical institution from the Pope, who also bestowed the archiepiscopal pallium; whereupon he travelled back to Cologne. Before reaching Cologne he sent his pallium in advance, whilst he entered the town

in a beggar's garb and barefooted, though it was winter. He was received with expressions of the liveliest joy by the inhabitants, and consecrated Bishop.

After spending three years in the government of his diocese, he was summoned to accompany the king on his journey to Italy. But Otho, being attacked with a mortal sickness, exacted from Heribert the promise to carry his body to Aix-la-Chapelle, which promise the Bishop faithfully executed. He also brought back to Germany the imperial diadem and the crown jewels. Still, his journey was not rapid enough for the new Emperor, Henry of Bavaria. Some evil-disposed courtier threw suspicions on his delay, and prejudiced the Emperor against the Archbishop. Henry, though a God-fearing and holy man, excited by this and other suspicions, treated Heribert very harshly for a time. The Saint, however, consoled himself with the testimony of a good conscience, and bore the displeasure of the Emperor in silence and patience, until it pleased God to soften the imperial heart. The Emperor was proceeding to Cologne, with the fixed determination of punishing the holy Bishop, for some unknown cause, when he beheld in his sleep a majestic prelate standing before him, and heard these words: "Beware of sinning against Heribert, my colleague. Know that he is beloved of God. If you lay hands on him, you will incur a heavy responsibility." The fright awoke the Emperor; he perceived his mistake, and, going to the holy Bishop, he asked pardon on his knees. Heribert raised the Emperor from the ground, conversed most amicably with him, excusing his errors, and giving him some salutary admonitions. At their parting they embraced each other. Henceforth, Henry esteemed the Bishop of Cologne as a Saint.

In truth, Heribert led a holy life. He was vigilant for the salvation of his subjects, exhorting them to the practice of virtue, not only by words but also by his own example. He promoted the glory of God with all his power, and for this purpose he founded a noble monastery. He built a splendid hospital for the poor and sick, where he was often seen washing their feet. He kept for his own use only the smallest portions of his revenues, devoting the greater part to the beautifying of the temples of God and to the relief of the destitute. His tenderness of heart to the unfortunate was especially manifested during a famine, which succeeded a long drought, and was the forerunner of a deathly pestilence. Neither money nor provisions were left him; he had distributed everything to the sufferers of the city and country. To appease the Divine wrath and obtain a fruitful rain, he ordered, first, a fast of three days, and then a penitential procession, which he himself headed, to the edification of the

whole city. Some expressing their astonishment that God was still deaf to their prayers after this procession, the humble servant of God exclaimed: "Yes, it is the fault of your Bishop; for if the Almighty were not angry at my wickedness, He would already have sent down the long-desired rain." | Whilst he was speaking, tears rolled down his cheeks, and he betook himself to prayer. Scarcely had he begun to send his petition to the throne of God, when the clouds gathered over the hitherto serene sky, and poured down a wholesome rain, which moistened and refreshed the whole land. This shower, bestowed in so wonderful a manner, was ascribed to the supplications of the holy Archbishop. Other writers also attribute to him many favors obtained by different persons through his intercession: such as restoration to health, recovery of sight, and deliverance from the Evil Spirit.

Finally, in the year 1021, whilst making his episcopal visitation, a violent fever seized him, at Reuss. He was transported by water to Cologne, where, shortly after, he slept in the peace of the Lord. Long before his death, he had executed his last will, leaving as his heirs, the church and the poor. He caused the legacy of the poor to be distributed to them while he was yet alive. We must not pass over in silence what is related in his life, as a terrible warning to those who despise the admonitions of the Priests of God, and indulge in lascivious dances. Eighteen persons had the impudence to dance in the cemetery of the village of Kolbeck, near Magdeburg. The Pastor, Robert, earnestly entreated them to desist. But as they answered him by scoffing at him, he called down the curse of God on the dancers. The effect was dreadful, and lasted an entire year. An incessant trembling of the whole body seized the wretches. After the afflictions had endured a year, St. Heribert freed the dancers from this manifest punishment of God. He conducted them to the church, in order to offer thanksgiving to the Almighty: three of them, however, died immediately at the foot of the altar, others two or three months later, whilst the rest carried their trembling to the grave.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. The motives of St. Heribert were falsely interpreted, and unjust suspicions cast upon him. The Saint, in these circumstances, trusted to the testimony of a guiltless conscience, and patiently suffered</p>	<p>the injury. No matter what you do, you cannot hinder your motives from being falsely interpreted. Our Lord Himself and the holiest servants of God did not fare better. When this happens to you, do not</p>
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give way to passion, and be not too much cast down. Do not heed the interpretation and judgment of men. Little, indeed, depends on what men say or think of you, but much—nay, everything—on the judgment of the Almighty, whose all-piercing eye infallibly sees everything; and who cannot be deceived in His judgment, whilst men are frequently mistaken. If you are innocent, rest tranquilly on the testimony of your conscience, and let men think and say of you what they please. You do not become holier or more acceptable to God when men praise and esteem you; neither are you less in the eyes of God when you are despised and slandered. St. Paul, whose conduct was severely criticised and falsely judged, writes: "But to me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day . . . But he that judges me is the Lord" (1 Cor. iv.). Speak and think likewise.

II. St. Heribert made his last will long before his death, and left the churches and the poor his heirs—nay, he even sent to the poor their share before dying. If the Lord has blessed you with worldly goods and placed you in a position to make a testament, I advise you not to neglect this duty, but, in the first place, to make it in season, whilst you enjoy health. "Draw up your will," says St. Augustine, "whilst you are in sound health and are yourself. If you wait until sickness comes over you, then you will be induced, by caresses and counsels or threats, to do that which you are unwilling to do." You will not die sooner because you have made your will; you will possess the liberty to alter it, if the dispositions do not suit you any longer. You will enjoy greater peace of mind both in health and in sickness. By neglecting this important duty, you

may give occasion to many sins and crimes. In the second place, make a just will; observe the laws of justice. Justice requires you to give every man his own. If you have a restitution to make, a damage to repair, or a debt to pay, do not imagine that it is enough to recommend it to your heirs, or to set apart some pious legacy for the church, for masses, or the poor. What you can restore, repair, or repay, you are obliged to restore yourself without delay. If you are guilty of neglect or delay in this respect, you continue in a state of sin. It is a highly dangerous thing to entrust the heirs with restitution or the payment of debts; if you are able to do it, fulfil this duty yourself. Experience proves that heirs are generally faithless. Besides, how can you believe that your heirs will be more solicitous about your salvation than you have been. Now, with regard to pious legacies, if they are derived from unjustly-acquired wealth, they cannot be acceptable to God nor useful to your soul, as I will point out to you in another place. "Honor the Lord with thy substance," not with that of your neighbor. To leave unjustly-gotten or strange goods to your children or heirs renders the owner and the heirs miserable. But even should prosperity smile on them for a while, is it not the greatest folly imaginable to expose them to an eternity of woe for a short and transient life of ease? Finally, let your testament be Christian. Do not forget Christ. Remember your soul and the poor. If it is in your power to assist in furthering the glory of God by beautifying churches or aiding in the support of pious works and foundations, do not let the opportunity slip. Set apart something for the poor; also for the benefit

of your own soul and the suffering souls in purgatory, by fixing a certain sum for masses. Observe these suggestions, and you shall die in peace, if your soul has been placed in the state of grace by true penance. But, mark well, whatever you can do before being stretched on your death-bed for the glory of God and the good of your soul, or the relief of the poor, do it yourself,

as St. Heribert did. "Do good to thy friend before thou die," says the wise man (Eccl. xvi.). Your best friends are Christ and your own soul. Therefore, whilst you are in health, do good to Christ in the person of the poor; work and strive for the salvation of your soul. "Do good to thy friend before thou die," as Holy Writ admonishes you.

SEVENTEENTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. PATRICK, BISHOP, AND ST. GERTRUDE OF BRABANT, VIRGIN.

St. Patrick is called the Apostle of Ireland because he was the first to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in that country. He was a native of France. At the age of sixteen, Patrick and his sister Lupsita were captured by pirates and sold as slaves in Ireland. His slavery lasted six years, and he was employed in guarding cattle. In this occupation, his life was holy and innocent. At the end of this time an angel delivered him, and brought him back to his native land. But he was captured and sold into slavery a second time, and was again liberated. God made known to Patrick, by repeated revelations, that he was chosen to bring about the conversion of the Irish race to the true faith. To fit himself for this, he earnestly applied himself to the study of letters.

As soon as he had acquired the requisite knowledge, he was raised to the priesthood. He now sought permission from the Sovereign Pontiff, Celestine, to preach the Gospel to the pagan people of Ireland. The Pope joyfully consented, and consecrated him Bishop. The Saint immediately set out upon his journey, accompanied by some zealous missionaries, and reached Ireland in the year 432. It is impossible to describe the labors and hardships the holy man had to undergo, the vexations and persecutions he suffered in preaching the religion of Christ. God blessed the efforts and sacrifices of Patrick to such a degree that in a short time whole cities submitted themselves to the yoke of Christ. Other towns and places gradually followed, so that, during the thirty years of his apostolic career, he built three hundred churches, besides many monasteries. He

divided the island into dioceses, and consecrated a Bishop for each See, and assigned Priests to every church, to continue the work of instructing the Christians and converting the pagans. Such a change of manners was wrought by the zeal of St. Patrick, and the lives of the inhabitants became so pure and edifying, that Ireland was called the "Isle of Saints."

The powers of hell were not idle; they opposed all imaginable obstacles to the propagation of the Gospel. But St. Patrick surmounted them all with Divine assistance. Leogarius, one of the mightiest kings of the island, and his magicians, resisted the Saint with all their might. But seeing the numerous miracles with which the holy Bishop confirmed the truth of his doctrine, the king granted him full liberty to preach in his domain. The pagan priests, furious at the success of Patrick, set on foot an uprising against the new Christians. They rose in arms to annihilate Christianity at one blow. The idolaters were ready to fall upon the converts, when, in the middle of a bright, clear day, a terrific thunderstorm burst forth from the heavens, which dispersed and routed the whole troop of pagans. The magicians, who were very numerous at the court of Leogarius, were put to shame, and left the service of the idols to become fervent Christians. The chief sorcerer alone remained obdurate. He, imitating the famous Simon Magus, promised to ascend into heaven; but as the latter had been cast to the earth by the prayers of Peter, so, at the prayers of St. Patrick, the prodigy was repeated, and the magician fell dead to the ground. This miracle was followed by numerous conversions.

The converts were most powerfully impelled to become fervent disciples of Jesus by the holy life and the many miracles of St. Patrick. The Saint gave his whole time to apostolic labors. He never would hear of repose or relaxation to renew his strength. His zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls was insatiable. He was not dismayed by any difficulty or hardship—his ardor was only enkindled the more. He traversed the whole island on foot, representing to the pagans their errors, and explaining to them the Christian religion. He instructed the rich and poor, the old and young, not only in the truths of faith, but also in reading and writing, because no others had any knowledge of letters. After having instructed them, he baptized thousands with his own hands. He consoled the sorrowing, assisted the destitute, visited and nursed the sick; in the words of the Apostle, "he became all things to all men, that he might save all." In these many and varied duties, his soul was most closely united to God, by constant ejaculations which he sent to heaven, to show his love for

God and to call down the Divine help on all his undertakings. His body was always clad in a rough hair shirt, and he made use of an almost perpetual fast. He divided the night into three parts: the first he devoted to the recitation of one hundred Psalms of David; the second he spent in saying the remaining fifty psalms and other pious devotions; the third was allotted to sleep, which he always took on hard stone. The miracles which he wrought are not less numerous nor less remarkable than those of the apostles. He dissipated the most violent storms by the sign of the cross; he restored sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, and hearing to the deaf,—nay, he even recalled the dead back to life; the sick were healed by his simple touch. He also had the gift of looking into the unknown future and of penetrating the secrets of the heart, as we find recorded in his life. In a word, he was a true apostle of Christ, whether we regard the many toils and labors he underwent in the conversion of the heathen, or his many miracles and his holy life. Even unbelievers highly venerated him on account of all these.

At last, after many years uninterruptedly spent in apostolic labors, God called His faithful servant to the reward prepared for him. He died at the age of eighty-three, in one of the many monasteries which he had founded for the education of zealous laborers who might prosecute his work of conversion. A choir of heavenly voices was heard singing at his death, and a bright splendor was seen for twelve nights around the monastery, lighting up the whole neighborhood. Pagans and Christians beheld it with joy and astonishment. We may say that the circumstances of the life of St. Patrick most deserving of admiration are: first, that amid the many perils to which he was exposed he preserved his virginal innocence untarnished during his long years; second, that one single man should be able to bear so many hardships and accomplish such glorious results for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. But He who chose Patrick also bestowed on him His Holy Spirit, and armed him with the invincible strength of the apostles. The remains of the Saint repose in the cathedral of Down, and his tomb is famous for the many miracles wrought at it.



The Roman Martyrology also mentions, on this day, St. Gertrude, who was born at Brabant, in the year 631. Her father was Count Pepin, Lord Chief Steward successively of three kings of France. Her mother was St. Itta. She was piously reared by her fervent parents. A son of the king of Austrasia, struck by

her beauty and noble qualities of soul, in presence of King Dagobert and her father, demanded her in marriage. The king was highly pleased at this request; the father also assented to the proposal. When Gertrude was called to give her consent, she thus addressed the king: "Sire, I have already chosen an immortal Spouse, and pledged Him my fidelity; I cannot now be faithless to Him by taking a human Bridegroom in His place." After the death of her husband, Itta, by the advice of the holy Bishop Amandus, built a nunnery and Church at Nivelles, into which she retired with her daughter, and spent the rest of her life in the service of God. The relations of Gertrude were much opposed to her resolution, but she remained firm. Many noble ladies and peasant girls followed the good example of St. Gertrude, and soon the convent was filled with souls devoted to the work of God. After the death of her mother, Gertrude was appointed Abbess. She was a pattern to all; towards her inferiors she was tender and amiable, and to the poor, most charitable. Adjoining the convent she built a large hospital for the infirm and destitute. Many hours of the day and the greater portion of the night the holy virgin consecrated to prayer. It was whilst engaged in this holy exercise that she was seen enveloped in a fiery globe, which had descended from heaven, and spread a supernatural lustre through the whole church. Fasting, watching, and mortification were a second nature to her. She was an enemy of idleness. She was always occupied in work, prayer, spiritual reading, or pious conferences with the other sisters.

At the age of thirty, a dangerous sickness confined her to bed, and God revealed to His spouse that her race was wellnigh run. She called all the sisters around her, and advised them to persevere in their holy vocation. Resigning the dignity of Abbess, she prepared for death by the fervent reception of the Sacraments. She left orders with regard to her funeral, and wished to be buried in the hair cloth she had worn during life, even in her last sickness. On the eve of her death, she sent a Priest to Ultanus, a pious pilgrim who was sojourning at the monastery of Fossa, to inquire on what day she would die, adding that she desired to die, but still feared that awful moment. Ultanus replied: "To-morrow, at the time of Mass, Gertrude, the faithful spouse of Jesus, will depart from this life. Tell her, in my name, to cast aside all fear, to be full of courage; for St. Patrick, with a company of angels, is awaiting her, and she will be received with great glory into heaven." Gertrude, comforted by this answer, thanked God, and, receiving again the body of Christ, yielded her pure soul into the hands of her heavenly Spouse, whilst the holy Sacrifice was offered up. This happy death

occurred in 664. At the moment of death, she appeared to her friend Modesta, Abbess of Trèves. By piously touching the couch of St. Gertrude many recovered their health, others their sight or the use of their limbs.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. For thirty years did St. Patrick sacrifice himself for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, amid incredible labors and hardships. What labor have you undertaken? How much time have you devoted to the welfare of your own soul? I say, your own soul! The soul you have is your own; you yourself must take care of its salvation. Were all men—nay, even were all the angels—solicitous about your soul, they could not bring it to heaven without your own active care. You can leave others to attend to every other concern or business without interfering, but, the salvation of your soul cannot be accomplished without your own personal exertions. God, who created your soul without your assistance, will not save it without your co-operation. It is your soul; your body will be united to it for all eternity; it will be your soul forever. If you are careful of it, as God requires, you alone will enjoy the benefit of this care, and you will be happy for all eternity. If, on the contrary, you are negligent, you alone will suffer, and be miserable for countless ages. Why, therefore, are you not more solicitous about your soul, on whose welfare so much depends? Why do you so often expose yourself to eternal ruin? “What have I done to thee?” said the ass, when she was beaten by Balaam—“why strikest thou me, lo, now the third time?” (Numb. xxii.) Does not your soul put the same question? “What have I done

to thee? Why dost thou inflict so many deadly wounds on me by thy sins? Am I not thy soul? Wilt thou not feel the injury?” You cannot, with any sense of justice, answer these complaints. Resolve for the future to pay greater attention to the wellbeing of your soul.

II. St. Gertrude dedicated many hours of the day, but many more of the night, to prayer. St. Patrick gave two-thirds of the night to this holy exercise, and during the day he raised his heart to God by fervent ejaculations, even in the midst of his most arduous labors. If I ask you to spend two hours every night in prayer, probably you would answer, that it is too hard, or even impossible. But did you never waste more than an hour of the night on play, eating or drinking, worldly or even sinful amusement? You were able to do this, and it is too hard, it is impossible, to pray for the same length of time! Are you not ashamed before your God? Still, I do not exact from you what was habitual with St. Patrick. At least, never retire to rest without devoutly saying your night-prayers, even though they be short. Many Christians have the praiseworthy habit of examining their conscience every evening and exciting themselves to perfect contrition. Out of love for your soul, adopt this practice. More importance attaches to this pious custom than you are aware of. There is no need of spending a long time at it: it is far better to be brief and fervent than

long and superficial. "When you are retiring for the night," writes St. Chrysostom, "examine your conscience, recall your sins, and say, within yourself: 'My soul, we have again passed a day together; what good or evil have we done to day?' If you have done some good, thank God. Did you commit sin, repent and amend!" This is what I ask of you, every night. During the day, also, imitate St. Patrick, by frequently raising your heart to God, by renewing your good intentions, by sentiments of repentance, by calling on the Lord for His aid, or by other pious aspirations. This is a very easy and a very meritorious practice; it helps us to fulfil the command of praying always. "We ought always to pray and not to faint," says our Lord (Luke xviii.). "It behoves a servant of God to work and pray without ceasing," writes St. Bernard.

I must add a few words on a point which you may have noticed in the life of St. Gertrude. This holy virgin led a life of virtue and holiness, and yet, at the hour of death, she is overcome with fear. The same thing is related of many other Saints. Your life is very different from hers, yet you have no fear of death. Whence is this? I think it is because you do not seriously consider what depends on death, and what follows it. Accord-

ing to the teachings of our holy Faith, eternity depends on death. If your death be happy, then you will be happy forever hereafter; but, if your death be miserable, such also shall eternity be for you. Faith further teaches that after death comes the strict judgment of God, the severe account of the whole life, and the sentence which determines the never-ending future. Reflect seriously on these two important truths, and you will learn to fear death. However, the dread arising from this consideration must not be fruitless for you, but rather such as to spur you on to a course of life which will permit you to expect a happy death. This terror must urge you to avoid whatever may render your last moments miserable, and to practice what may merit the grace of a happy death. A virtuous life, a horror of sin, works of penance and mercy, render a man happy: sin, and the neglect of good works, bring a bad ending. "If you are afraid of death," says St. Augustine, "why are you not more careful in shunning sin, which makes death terrible? You fear to die miserably, nevertheless you are not afraid to live wickedly. Amend your wicked life, strive to live well, for the reward is eternal. Live well, live piously, that you may not die badly,—that is, the death of the wicked."

EIGHTEENTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. NARCISSUS, BISHOP OF AUGSBURG, MARTYR, AND ST. BRAULIUS,
BISHOP OF CÆSARAUGUSTA (SARAGOSSA).

At Gerunda, in Spain, the holy Bishop Narcissus crowned an edifying life with a glorious martyrdom in the persecution of Diocletian. The Roman Martyrology and many historians testify to this. The date and place of his birth are unknown to us; but it is certain that he governed the diocese of Gerunda, before coming to Germany. The Christians of this city were subjected to a violent persecution by command of the tyrants, when Narcissus, in obedience to a warning from heaven, secretly withdrew with his deacon, Felix, to Germany, where he preached the Gospel to the pagans. Arriving at Augsburg, which was entirely buried in idolatry, it happened that he took lodgings in a house, where Afra, a public sinner, dwelt, and drew her subsistence from a life of shame. Her wonderful conversion to Christianity and purity of life are recorded on the sixth of August. St. Narcissus persuaded her to lead a life of penance and retirement, in which she persevered until she crowned it with a glorious martyrdom. This conversion was due to the edifying example of the holy Bishop and his companions, to his charitable exhortations, and also to the representations of the sufferings endured by Christ for mankind, and of the infinite mercy shown to Magdalen, the sinner. The companions of Afra, in her martyrdom, were her mother and her three servants.

After this successful beginning, the holy Bishop turned his efforts to the citizens of the place; he proved to them the falsity of the gods they worshipped, and preached to them the only true God and Redeemer with such force that many forsook their idols and embraced the yoke of Christ. The miracles with which the Almighty confirms the preaching of the Gospel, when it is announced to the heathen, and which also accompanied the words of the holy Bishop, convinced the inhabitants that the religion of which Narcissus was the herald was the only true one: hence but few remained unbelievers in the city and its environs. Narcissus is venerated as the patron and apostle of this region, because he converted the inhabitants to the true faith. The Saint continued his labors of a missionary here for nine months, to the great spiritual benefit of the people. The Christians increased not only in numbers, but also in fervor and zeal.

At the expiration of this period, the Lord called the Saint

back to Spain. He appointed a Bishop over the city, and provided zealous pastors for the new converts who would continue and strengthen the work of conversion and incite the Christians to new fervor. Then, amidst tears and sighs, he bade farewell to the dear children, whom, like St. Paul, he had brought forth in Christ, and returned to Spain. He resumed his apostolic labors for the conversion of souls at Gerunda. During the three following years he gathered into the true fold those whom the fear of torture, in the late persecution, had led astray. He strengthened and encouraged the faithful servants of God. In a word, he was a true, tender, and vigilant pastor. He now turned his attention to those wandering outside of the pale of the church, and living in the darkness of idolatry, and led very many into the light of Christian truth.

Satan was enraged at the havoc which the apostolic labors of Narcissus caused in his realm. He incited some heathens, who persisted in their errors, to avenge the insults, as they said, offered to their gods. The Saint was aware of their wicked purpose, but he despised this peril, and continued in the exercise of his usual zeal, esteeming it a great favor to shed his blood for Christ. One day, therefore, whilst celebrating the Divine Mysteries, the assassins, with drawn swords, rushed into the temple, and struck the Saint on the neck, shoulder, and knee. The holy martyr sank to the ground, and surrendered his pure soul to his Master, at the foot of the altar. His body lies at Gerunda, where he is honored as the special protector of the city.

The following miracle is not the least of the many which happened at his tomb. Philip, King of France, who was waging war against Peter of Aragon, had taken Gerunda by assault. Some impious soldiers, coming to the tomb of Narcissus, plundered and despoiled it of all the votive jewels which adorned the shrine. But, almost immediately after, an innumerable swarm of large flies rose up from the tomb, and, attacking with their poisonous stings not only the sacrilegious thieves, but the whole hostile army, with marvellous fury, destroyed forty thousand men and twenty thousand horses. The king himself, shortly afterwards, died at Perpignan. Hence the saying, "The flies of Narcissus."



To-day is also celebrated the feast of St. Braulius, Bishop. He was born at Saragossa. He was distinguished, in his youth, for a great love of virtue and an ardent desire for proficiency in learning. He placed himself under the direction of the Bishop

of Seville, St. Isidore, renowned for his learning and sanctity. Under the guidance of this great master, his desire of learning was satisfied, and his success so remarkable that St. Isidore did not hesitate to submit his own writings to the judgment of his scholar. In later years, Braulius was made Archdeacon of his native city, and, a little while after, raised to the episcopal chair. The hand of Divine Providence was visibly discerned in this; for when the clergy had assembled to determine on a successor to the deceased Bishop, a fiery globe was seen descending, which rested on the head of Braulius, who was present. At the same time the words resounded through the hall: "Behold, this is my faithful servant, whom I love, and on whom my Spirit rests." All recognized this manifestation of the Divine will, and exclaimed: "Braulius is our Bishop." The holy Archdeacon could not refuse the dignity, because he was unwilling to disobey the will of God, so clearly expressed. He accepted the burden laid on his shoulders, and strove to discharge faithfully the arduous duties of a Bishop.

There were still many Arian heretics among the inhabitants of Saragossa. The Saint exerted every effort to convert them and to confirm the Catholics in their faith. He traversed his whole diocese, preaching everywhere, instructing the ignorant, and refuting the Arians so completely, that they were reduced to silence. The heretics, in return for this zeal, heaped only abuse and insults on the Bishop, which did not in the least discourage him. He considered it a signal favor of heaven to shed his blood for the Catholic faith. God, however, did not confer this grace on Braulius, but we can, nevertheless, say, that he was a bloodless martyr, both on account of the many persecutions he suffered for the defence of the faith, and for his continued mortifications; for he never allowed any scope to sensuality in eating, drinking, sleeping, or in his whole manner of living; on the contrary, he was ever on the alert to chastise and torture his innocent body with the most severe penances. Towards the poor and destitute his course was altogether different. For them he had only love and tenderness, and he devoted all his revenues to their relief. His zeal for the adornment of churches was not less remarkable. The hours which were not employed in his episcopal functions, were consecrated to prayer in some church of our Lady. His holy life added so much force to his words that nearly all the heretics were brought back to the true fold, and the Catholics converted to a more edifying manner of life.

For nearly twenty years did the holy Bishop rule over his diocese with the greatest vigilance, when he was called to enter into the joys of his Lord. The Archbishop of Tarracona, who,

with some other prelates, was present at the death of St. Braulius, declared that he distinctly heard these words: "Rise, my friend, and come." Whereupon the Saint, as if awaking from a deep sleep, said: "Behold, Lord, I come;" and at the same moment his soul passed away. His remains were placed in a shrine, and 600 years later, were found as fresh and sound as at the moment of death.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Narcissus converted a great public sinner by representing what Jesus Christ had done and suffered for the salvation of mankind, but especially by recalling the great mercy of the Saviour towards Magdalen. Call this vividly to your mind, that you also may thereby be excited to produce worthy fruits of penance. He is ready to extend to you the same forgiveness which He bestowed on Magdalen, if you employ the means which the Church offers you. Courageously embrace penance. Do not let Satan frighten you by the enormity or number of your sins. God's mercy is infinitely greater than your wickedness. He will assuredly receive you again into His favor, if you do not neglect what He requires of you. He is willing and able to extend mercy to you. What more do you wish? "Because God is good, He has mercy on the sinner," exclaims St. Augustine, "and He can be merciful because He is all-powerful." The sinner then, who yields to despair, closes the gates of mercy against himself, either because he believes that God cannot pardon, or will not pardon, and therefore denies God the infinite attributes of mercy and power.

II. To pour out their blood for Christ's sake the two holy bishops esteemed a great favor. Narcissus was happy in sacrificing his life for God. The holy desire of Braulius

was not gratified, still he endeavored to be a bloodless martyr. You have not the opportunity of partaking of this great happiness. But remember what St. Peter Damian writes: "You cannot shed your blood for Christ; you can at least suffer by penance. You cannot, like the martyrs, die for the sake of Jesus, but you can lead a life pleasing in the sight of God. It is a great thing to die for Christ, but not less so to live for Christ." Now, to live for Christ, means to dispose your life according to the precepts, doctrine and example of our great model, to dedicate it entirely to His service. This not only lies in your power, but it is incumbent on you, as a Christian, just as a sinner is obliged to do penance. Resolve to practise both, and you will share in the happiness of the martyrs who poured out their blood for their Master. "Christ died for all; that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them," writes St. Paul (II. Cor. v.). Impress this lesson deeply on your soul. The inestimable benefit of redemption, though it imposes on us a great love for our dear Lord, requires also, as a proof of our gratitude, that we live for Him alone. "If I pass over all the other favors bestowed on us, still Jesus not unjustly requires our life, for this single reason, that He laid down His own life for us. Therefore no one ought

to live for himself, but for Him only who died for us. In truth, for whom can I more justly live, than for Him,	without whose death, I would not possess life," thus speaks St. Bernard.
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NINETEENTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. JOSEPH, FOSTER-FATHER OF JESUS.

The great and glorious St. Joseph, the immaculate spouse of Mary, the foster-father of our Lord Jesus Christ, belonged to the royal race, as the Evangelists Matthew and Luke testify in the genealogy which they trace from Abraham to David, and from the latter to Jacob, the father of Joseph. The place of his nativity is unknown; but it is very probable that it was Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, where he dwelt and worked as a carpenter. It should excite no surprise to find a descendant of royal blood gaining his livelihood in this humble employment: there is nothing strange in a person of the highest nobility being reduced to poverty. Moreover, it was a dispensation of Providence; for, as the Redeemer chose a stable for His palace, and poverty for His lot, so He also refused to have a wealthy and highly honored foster-father. Nothing is known of the childhood and youth of Joseph. Nevertheless, from what we glean from the Scriptures, we can safely conclude that he was a perfect observer of the law, and led a most holy life. Holy Writ calls him a just man; that is, a man perfect in every virtue, and far advanced in the path of holiness.

But his sanctity is still more manifest in the exalted charge which the Almighty confided to him, and in the dignity to which he was raised. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, God bestows graces and gifts in proportion to the excellence of the state and office in which a person is placed. But God selected St. Joseph of all mankind, as the spouse of Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ, and as the foster-father of His only Son, the Redeemer of the world. A moment's reflection on the greatness of the personages confided to the guardianship of Joseph, will convince us that no more responsible office, no greater dignity, was ever entrusted to man. Hence with this dignity and office were joined numberless and great graces, as well as extraordinary virtue and sanctity.

By a particular disposition of Providence, he espoused the purest virgin, Mary; and a new fountain of graces was opened to him. St. Joseph had preserved his virginity: and Mary, the most

holy Virgin, had undoubtedly received the assurance from heaven, that the virginity which she had consecrated to God, would remain intact in the married state. The espousals were celebrated; but the holy couple did not alter their manner of life. They gave an example which had been unknown in all preceding times, but which was to have many imitators in succeeding ages. Thus we see St. Cœcilia and St. Valerian, St. Pulcheria and Marcian, St. Cunegundes and St. Henry, St. Edith and St. Edward, St. Basilissa and St. Julian, St. Daria and St. Chrysanthus, who, in the married state, lived as virgins. Joseph and Mary were the first to give the example: and their union was far more intimate than that which exists between married couples. They served God with greater devotion and perfection.

Four months after the marriage, the Blessed Virgin was saluted by the angel, and the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God accomplished in her virginal womb; but Joseph was ignorant of the great event. When the Blessed Virgin returned from her visit to her cousin, St. Elizabeth, Joseph noticed that she was blessed with fruit, and his soul was filled with anxiety. The holiness of Mary forbade him to suspect any evil of her, and yet he knew not what to think of the fact his eyes so plainly recognized. He finally resolved to leave her secretly, and draw upon himself the ill-will of his relatives rather than afflict Mary in the least. But an angel appeared to Joseph in his sleep, saying: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. i.). It is easier to imagine than to express in words, the joy which filled the soul of Joseph at this message from heaven. Words equally fail to declare his reverence for the mother of God, and all the services he rendered her.

When the time for the birth of the Saviour was approaching, St. Joseph was obliged to travel with the Virgin Mother to Bethlehem, to obey the edict of Augustus, and have their names enrolled. They went to Bethlehem because they were descended from the race of David. God had so disposed this, that Christ might be born in the spot foretold by the prophets. St. Joseph was everywhere refused lodgings at Bethlehem, and he was forced with the Virgin Mother to take refuge in a miserable stable. Though he felt great grief on account of the indignity thus offered to his holy spouse, still he humbly submitted to the will of God. When the saving birth was accomplished, we can easily picture to ourselves how his heart was inundated with joy, with what reverence he adored his Lord and God, with what tenderness he kissed and embraced the Divine Babe. His joy was augmented by the arrival of the shepherds, whom the angels

had invited to adore the Messiah. Still greater was his delight when the three Kings of the East came to pay their homage to him, whom his own nation ignored, despised, and shamefully rejected.

Forty days after the birth of Jesus, St. Joseph and the Immaculate Mother went to the Temple, and, according to the law, presented the child to His Heavenly Father. How the heart of Joseph beat with joy, when the venerable Simeon recognized, by Divine inspiration, the Messiah in this little babe, and declared himself willing to die after having seen him! Scarcely had they returned from the Temple, when the angel brought to St. Joseph in the night, the command to fly with the mother and child into Egypt; because Herod was seeking the life of the child. He hastened to obey this severe order. He rose and started on the journey. After the death of Herod, he was again admonished by the angel to return to the land of Israel. He did as he had been ordered; though he did not go into the land of Judea through fear of Archelaus, who had succeeded Herod on the throne; but proceeded according to another intimation of the angel, to Nazareth, where he took up his abode. Joseph was faithful in visiting the Temple at the stated time. When Jesus had reached his twelfth year, He accompanied Joseph and His mother in their yearly visit to the Temple of Jerusalem, but remained behind, when his guardians began their journey homeward. As soon as the foster-father was aware of His absence, he was overcome with sorrow, and most diligently sought for Jesus. After a search of three days, the child was found sitting in the midst of the doctors in the Temple. The sorrow and anxiety of St. Joseph were turned into joy. Jesus came back with his parents and was subject to them. This is all that we can glean from the Scripture concerning St. Joseph.

There is no doubt that Joseph was regarded by all as the true father of Jesus; for he displayed a fatherly tenderness towards Christ, and most devotedly provided for His support. On the other hand, Jesus was believed to be the son of Joseph, as He really yielded to him the honor, obedience, and love of a son. How long St. Joseph lived is hidden from us. It is a tradition worthy of belief, that he died about the beginning of the public life of Jesus. How happy and consoling was the death of Joseph, in the arms of Jesus and Mary! No other human being ever enjoyed so great a favor. For this reason, St. Joseph is justly honored as the special patron of the dying, and invoked for the grace of a happy death. As soon as his soul, enriched with many graces and merits, departed from the body, it descended, in company with the angels, to Limbo, where, by its arrival, it

comforted the souls of the just, with the great tidings of the approaching redemption. The body of the Holy Patriarch was interred, according to Jewish rites, but many doctors of the Church give it as their opinion, that this holy body was re-united to the soul, and taken with it to heaven. The relationship of Joseph to Jesus and Mary, whose bodies are already glorified, makes this assertion more acceptable; though there is no positive certainty on this head. This much, however, is undeniable, that St. Joseph is, next to the Blessed Virgin, the most worthy of the honor and veneration of the faithful, on account of the high dignity to which he was raised by Almighty God, as the foster-father of Christ, the incarnate Son of God. St. Teresa endeavored most strenuously to spread devotion to this Holy Patriarch; and she declared that no request which she asked of the Lord through St. Joseph had ever been refused. Pius IX. recently, in a most solemn manner, placed the whole Church under his powerful protection.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Joseph is painted with a lily in his hand, and the child Jesus on his arm. The lily signifies his virginal purity, and the child Jesus denotes the great grace which St. Joseph received, of gazing upon the Saviour of the world, clasping Him to his heart, serving and protecting Him. You justly esteem St. Joseph happy on this account. But who is He whom you can daily behold on the altar, under the appearance of bread and wine, and whom you can often receive into your heart? Is it not the same Jesus whom St. Joseph carried about in his arms? Why do you not acknowledge and prize this great favor which has fallen to your lot, and which is, in some measure, greater than that of St. Joseph? Why do you not partake of this great happiness, by daily assisting at the sacrifice of Mass, and by the frequent reception of Holy Communion? Do it for the future, but with due fervor and devotion. Be most careful to offer

to your Divine Saviour a pure and clean heart. St. Joseph always carried and embraced the child Jesus with pure and chaste hands. Your heart also must be pure and chaste when you approach him. The manna was preserved in a golden vessel in the Ark of the Covenant. The sacred body of Christ, when taken from the cross, was wrapped in the finest and purest linen, and laid in a new sepulchre. How then ought your heart to be adorned, in receiving the true Manna, the most sacred body and blood of Christ! "Does any one lay a rich and magnificent robe in a chest covered with dust and filth?" asks St. Augustine. If you do not lay your robe in a filthy chest, how can you dare to offer your heart soiled and defiled with sin, "as a resting-place to the Holy of Holies?" What an injury would not St. Joseph have committed against the Saviour; what punishment would he not have deserved, if, instead of taking Him up with

pure and clean hands, he had cast Him into the mire? Do you imagine that your offence is less when you receive Jesus into a heart defiled by sin? Oza, the Priest, was punished with sudden death, for irreverently touching the Ark in which the manna was kept. What have you then to expect, if you receive Holy Communion unworthily?

II. Did you remark how St. Joseph acted when he discovered the condition of the Blessed Virgin? Learn from him to be slow and discreet in your suspicions about your neighbor. Never be hasty in these matters. You may be guilty of grievous sins. If your reasons for suspecting are well grounded, never speak of them to any one whose duty does not entitle him to this information. Married persons especially ought never to listen to the evil spirit when he inspires them with thoughts of jealousy; otherwise they will expose themselves to many sins. Remark also how promptly and humbly St. Joseph executed the commands of God, brought to him by an angel. Follow his example, and perform, without delay, whatsoever the Almighty enjoins on you through your confessor, the minister of His word, or by interior inspirations. This obedience will

make you acceptable to God during life, and happy at the hour of death. St. Joseph was most happy in death, because he died in the presence of Jesus and Mary, and under their protection. He loved them in life, and they assisted him in death. Love Jesus and Mary after the pattern of St. Joseph, whilst you are in sound health, and you will feel their help in your agony. To-day choose this great Saint for your special patron, and daily honor him as St. Teresa did, who speaks of him thus: "I have chosen the glorious Patriarch, St. Joseph, for my patron and intercessor with the Almighty. Often have I recommended myself to him, and have always experienced his powerful protection, especially when my honor or eternal welfare was at stake; nay, I obtained greater help than I expected. Likewise, I do not recollect ever having asked any favor, through his intercession, which I did not receive. It seems to me that God grants to other Saints the privilege of hastening to our assistance in special cases; but that St. Joseph has universal power to aid us, my own experience has taught me; as if God wished us to understand that he can refuse nothing to him, whom He obeyed as a father on earth.

TWENTIETH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. ABRAHAM, HERMIT AND CONFESSOR.

One of the most celebrated Saints of the Old Testament was the holy patriarch Abraham, of whose wonderful obedience and other virtues the Holy Scripture speaks with much praise. At present we are not concerned with him, but with another, who living in the New Law, bore the same name, and spent many years of his mortal career a hermit in the wilds of Syria. St. Ephrem wrote his life, from which we copy the following details.

The parents of Abraham belonged to the wealthy nobility, and almost compelled their son, on reaching a mature age, to wed a rich young gentlewoman. Urged by the Spirit of God, Abraham secretly left his bride in the evening, and fled into the wilderness, where finding an empty hut, he made it his abode. After a lapse of time, his parents obtained information of his whereabouts, through those who had been commissioned by them to search for him. The parents repaired to the hut of Abraham, and making use of caresses and promises, reproaches and tears, and finally even of threats and violence, strove to bring him back to his father's house. But the servant of God, had already tasted, in his solitude, the sweetness of the Divine service, and persevered unshaken in his resolution. His holy manner of living was soon known over the whole region, but the following circumstance added new lustre to his reputation for sanctity.

The city of Lampsacus, had under its jurisdiction, a village called Tanea, very populous, but fettered still in the trammels of idolatry. The Bishop had repeatedly sent thither holy men to convert the inhabitants to the faith of the true God. These were unsuccessful, being either contemptuously driven away or killed. God had reserved the conversion of this town for Abraham. For, being ordained Priest against his will, he was sent to Tanea to preach the Gospel. He went full of confidence in the Divine power, and built, with the help of some friends, a little church for himself. The obdurate pagans, by the disposition of Providence, had great reverence for the holy hermit, and did not, for the moment, molest him. However, after completing his small church and preparing himself by long and continued prayer, he began to break the idols and to preach the Word of God. Then also the heathens commenced to persecute and abuse the holy man. He was several times driven from the town, and so cruelly beaten that he was left for dead. No sooner had he, by the help of God recovered, than he betook himself to his church, and besought the Lord to open the eyes of this blind race, and soften their obdurate hearts. At last his prayers were heard. For when the inhabitants saw the invincible patience, heroic zeal, and fatherly tenderness of the hermit towards them, they concluded that the God whom Abraham preached could be no other than the true God. They came to him, asking pardon for the insults and injuries they had heaped upon him, listened to his instructions and were baptized. The joy and consolation, which the apostolic laborer experienced at this change, may be easily imagined. This work being accomplished, Abraham again sought his cherished solitude, leaving his newly converted fold to another pastor.

An extraordinary event took place some years later, which shows out in bold relief the solicitude of the Saint for the salvation of a great sinner. A brother of Abraham left at his death a daughter seven years old: but no one was willing to take charge of the little orphan. The hermit, moved to pity, placed her in a cell beside his own, and instructed her in the truths of faith, and the practices of religion. The child, whose name was Mary, improved under the direction of her uncle, and made considerable progress in virtue, with the firm resolution of spending her whole life in solitude. The Almighty, however, permitted that a young man, who frequently visited the old hermit under pretence of seeking advice from him, should lead Mary to commit sin. Scarcely had the deed been done, when remorse of conscience seized her, and her soul was filled with restlessness. She thought it impossible to confess her sin; shame withheld her. Listening to the Evil Spirit, who represented to her that she could not be pardoned, she followed the suggestion of the devil to return to the world, and live according to the lusts of the flesh. She secretly fled from her cell, and after wandering about for two days, she arrived in the city, and repaired to a God-forsaken innkeeper, in whose house she led a life of sin and vice.

As soon as the Saint had discovered the flight of his niece, he had recourse to God, offering to the Divine Majesty countless tears, together with prayers and mortifications, for the conversion of his relative and pupil. After long prayer and much search, he found her hiding-place. Burning with zeal to lead her back to God, he left his cell, and disguising himself as an officer of the army, arrived in the city on horseback. God guided his steps, and he alighted at the very inn where the unfortunate woman was carrying on her scandalous course. He did not immediately lay aside his disguise on seeing her, but ordered a meal to be prepared, during which he kindly conversed with Mary. After dinner, they were left alone, but she did not recognize her visitor. But when, with tears in his eyes, he discovered himself, and, full of gentleness, represented to her the error of her ways, she was struck with horror and confusion. Tears choked her utterance. When her weeping allowed her to speak, she fell at the feet of Abraham and sought forgiveness; she then related to him all that had befallen her, and declared herself ready to follow his advice. The holy man wept with her, and pitied her misfortune, comforting her, and reviving her courage with the promises of the Divine mercy. But as the first and most important point was to forsake the occasion of sin, he entreated this wayward child to return with him into the solitude, and do penance for her vices. She gladly consented, and entered her former cell, where, after

making a good confession, she led a life of penance and perfection to the end. This wonderful conversion filled the heart of the holy solitary with great joy, and he never ceased to thank God for the great mercy shown to this wandering sheep. He himself closed his holy career, full of virtue and merits, at a very advanced age. Five years after his death, the penitent Mary also was called to her reward, God had previously enriched her with many supernatural favors; among others she had received, through the blessed Abraham, the consoling assurance that all her past sins had been forgiven.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. From the admonitions of Abraham to his erring niece, learn what you have to do if you should fall into mortal sin. Revive your hopes by meditating on the Divine mercy, and strive against undue dejection and despair: moreover, shun the proximate occasions of sin. Have recourse to the tribunal of penance, and embrace a penitential life. You know from the Catechism, that our Divine Lord instituted Sacramental Confession, as also that it is necessary in order to obtain the remission of mortal sin. No fasting or prayers, alms, or other good works can remit a single mortal sin. Perfect contrition, when confession is impossible, also works the pardon of mortal sins; but perfect contrition always includes the firm resolution of actual confession at the first opportunity. If you neglect to confess your sins when the chance is given you, the hope of pardon is taken away. The confession of our sins, as the Church teaches, must be made to a priest; for he alone has received power from the Almighty to forgive sins. It is not, therefore, enough to confess your sins to God or to a man who is not endowed with the priestly character; for Christ has ordained and commanded that the confession be made to a priest, and it is only on this condi-

tion that he has promised to forgive your sins. Now, in order to make a good confession, it is requisite to examine your conscience carefully, excite yourself to supernatural sorrow, and form a firm purpose to avoid sin, as well as the occasions of sin, and lastly, to declare sincerely, in the sacred tribunal, all the mortal sins with which your soul reproaches you. If a single one of these parts is wanting, not only is there no forgiveness, but a new and more grievous sin is added. Reflect, therefore, on your previous confessions. If you discover any deficiency in them, correct it in season, by the advice of a Spiritual guide whom you ought to consult; and, for the future, be more careful to neglect nothing which may render your confessions good. For the words of St. Isidore are true: "All our hopes are founded on confession. It heals our wounds, obtains pardon for sin, appeases an irritated God, quiets our conscience, and opens the gates of heaven." "A sinner," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "can have no hope of salvation, except through a sincere confession. By a sacrilegious confession he only sinks lower in the flames of hell."

II. Mary, the sinner, was ashamed to reveal, in the sacred tribunal of penance, her first grievous sin; con-

sequently she gave up going to confession, and rushed headlong into the path of vice, in which she would certainly have perished, if she had not followed the warnings of the holy solitary, and confessed with a contrite heart. Shame keeps many from confession. Others, it is true, present themselves before the minister of God; but, out of shame, wilfully conceal some grievous sin. Are you one of these unfortunate individuals? Then I ask you: do you never intend to disclose your sin, or is it your purpose to reveal it on some more fitting occasion? Are you determined to hide your sin always, or will you unbosom yourself later to a confessor? If it is your resolution never to confess your sins, or to persevere in the concealment of one particular sin, then, I tell you, hell is waiting for you; for you will most certainly be lost if you die in your sins. But if you intend to confess this hidden sin at some future time, tell me why will you not do it immediately? The longer you postpone it, the greater will be your difficulty in bringing yourself to confession, and revealing this long concealed sin. It is a sad fact, attested by experience, that those who suppress a sin for a while in confession, cannot even force themselves on their death-bed to disclose it. The difficulty then seemed so great, that they were led to believe that to be an impossibility which is one of the most important obligations of a Christian.

I therefore advise you, whenever you have sinned, to have recourse to confession without delay. Never wilfully conceal a mortal sin. If you follow this advice, you enjoy the benefits of which St. Lawrence Justinian speaks in the last section. But if you neglect it, all your confessions are not only worthless, but also sacrilegious. For, if you do

not tell all your mortal sins, you obtain pardon for none, and moreover, you add another great sin, a sacrilege, because you profane the Sacrament of Penance. If you approach Holy Communion in this state, you incur terrible guilt, and merit a most awful punishment. Is there anything more horrible than this? If, then, you have committed mortal sins, disclose them sincerely. It requires only a courageous victory over self. You were not ashamed to commit sin. Why, then, should you be ashamed to confess it? Or do you think it a disgrace to go to confession? Is it easier to be consumed in the flames of hell for ever, than to bear a little shame for a few moments, whilst you are discovering your sins? However, consider to whom you confess: to a priest, a man like yourself, who compassionates your misfortune; but who can never reveal even the least word heard in the confessional. After weighing what I have said, how can you still harbor this false shame in your breast? Examine yourself to-day, whether you have yielded to this sinful fear. If, alas! your conscience reproaches you with sins untold in confession, of Communions sacrilegiously received, Oh! then enter into yourself, and, without delay, throw yourself at the feet of the minister of God; ask his advice in your wretched state. You are obliged, under these circumstances, 1st—To confess sincerely the sins which you have concealed; 2d—You must add that this is a sin which you withheld in former confessions; 3d—State how many confessions and communions were thus sacrilegiously made; and lastly, you must repeat all your mortal sins, beginning from that confession in which you first concealed the sin. Do not delay, but go immediately; above all, do not postpone this obli-

gation until sickness stretches you on your bed. For if you wait until then, I greatly fear that you will not have the courage to confess; if death should not have already suddenly snatched you away. If my admonitions appear hard, remember that to be tortured in the flames of hell forever is far harder. Be courageous to overcome yourself, and, for the future, do not give way to this false shame. "What are you afraid to reveal in confession?" asks St. Augustine. "What

I hear in confession, I know far less than if I had never heard it at all. Why do you blush to approach the tribunal of penance? I am a sinner like you; I am a man. You, a man, confess to a man; a sinner, to a sinner." Choose now. If you do not go to confession and reveal your sins, you will be lost without confession. God requires confession in order to deliver the humble man. God condemns him who does not confess, and thus punishes the proud man.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF MARCH.

ST. BENEDICT, PATRIARCH OF THE WESTERN MONKS.

At Nursia, in the Dukedom of Spoleto, in the year 480, was born, of noble and wealthy parents, the celebrated patriarch and founder of many religious communities, St. Benedict. He advanced rapidly in his studies at Rome, whither he had been sent at the age of seven. At the age of fifteen he quitted Rome, out of fear of tarnishing his innocence amid the many perils of that capital, and fled into a wilderness, fifteen miles distant from Rome, and called Sublacum. Here he met Romanus, a priest, who asked him what he sought. Benedict replied: "A spot in which to hide myself from the world and live for God alone." Romanus, rejoiced at this answer, pointed out to him a cave in a lofty mountain, and gave him the monastic habit, and every week supplied him with a few crusts for his food. The holy young man lived three years in this cavern, but in such austerity that he surpassed even the old solitaries by his severity. The devil sought to diminish the fervor of Benedict by all possible means, but his efforts were fruitless. At last he tormented him day and night with impure thoughts. He represented to his imagination a woman whom the Saint had seen at Rome, but with whom he had never formed any acquaintance. Benedict had recourse to prayer and fasting, but the impure spirit would not depart. Then the holy youth employed an unheard-of means. Stripping off his clothes, he rolled himself in briars and nettles, which grew near his retreat, until his body was covered with blood. From that moment until the end of his life he was released from impure thoughts and temptations.

After three years of this austere life, God made known his sanctity to the world. A pious priest, who dwelt at a distance of two miles from Benedict's cave, was preparing a good dinner for Easter Sunday. During the night preceding the festival, he heard a voice saying: "You are preparing for yourself a banquet, whilst my servant Benedict is distressed with hunger." The priest awoke, and, taking as much of the food as he could carry, brought it to the cave of the Saint and invited him to eat. The priest profited by the occasion to learn from the young solitary the story of his life. He highly venerated the young man, and made known his sanctity throughout the whole country. There was a monastery in the neighborhood, the monks of which chose Benedict to succeed their late Abbot. The humble servant of God declined, alleging that his austere manner of life would not be acceptable to them. After repeated entreaties, he yielded, and was invested Abbot. Soon, however, the monks were displeased with the reprehensions and penances of Benedict, and, regretting their choice, sought to rid themselves of the holy Abbot by mingling poison with his drink. The cup was presented to the Saint, who made the sign of the cross over it, when the glass was shattered to pieces. Benedict, to whom the wickedness of the monks was known by revelation, meekly chided their fault, and, bidding them farewell, returned to his former cave.

But very soon the Lord sent him others who desired to become his disciples, and to tread the path of perfection under his guidance. Inspired by God, he received them, and, being gifted with heavenly wisdom, instructed them in all virtues. The number of disciples increasing daily, he built several monasteries and distributed the monks in them. He also prescribed rules, by the observance of which the followers of St. Benedict arrived at great sanctity. The Saint now repaired to Monte Cassino, where there was a temple and grove dedicated to Apollo, whom the inhabitants honored as their god. Full of zeal, St. Benedict broke the idol to pieces, destroyed the temple, and burned the grove. On the ruins he raised two chapels in honor of St. John the Baptist, and the holy Bishop Martin; and by his preaching he soon converted the Pagans to the true faith, overcoming all the difficulties which Satan interposed. It was here also that he built a monastery, which has become famous, and is known under the name of Monte Cassino, from the mountain on which it is built. This was the cradle of the Benedictine Order, which is now over twelve hundred years old, and has given to the Church two hundred cardinals and forty popes, besides many other prelates, with a great number of profoundly learned men and Saints. Scholastica, the holy sister of St. Benedict, followed his

example also, and quitted the world, in order to devote herself entirely to God. The Saint built a convent for her and other holy virgins similarly disposed, charging Scholastica with the care of its inmates; and she thus became the foundress and mother of the monastic life for the female sex. It would take us too long to relate all that St. Benedict accomplished during the years he spent at Monte Cassino, both for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Neither are we able to enumerate all the wonders which God performed through His servant. But what is a greater subject of surprise is, that he communicated to others also the power of working miracles. One instance will sufficiently prove this. Many illustrious personages had entrusted their children to the holy monk, to instruct them in the ways of knowledge and virtue. The Saint gladly accepted the trust, esteeming the good education of children a duty of the highest importance. Among these children was Placidus, who, in riper years, embraced the monastic discipline. This boy was sent one day to draw water from the lake, but, through heedlessness, fell into the water, and was in imminent peril of being drowned. Benedict, by supernatural revelation, saw the danger, and calling a monk named Maurus, sent him immediately to deliver the lad from his perilous situation. Maurus ran quickly, but he beheld the boy already in the middle of the lake, driven to and fro by the water. Without stopping to consider whither he was going, Maurus boldly advanced towards Placidus, as if he were walking on the solid ground, and, seizing the drowning boy by the hair, dragged him to the shore. This was the same Placidus who afterwards crowned his monastic career by a glorious martyrdom. The holy Abbot had often, especially in seasons of famine, miraculously multiplied the bread, oil, and other provisions, thus supplying his disciples, as well as the poor, with food. Besides working miracles, the Saint had also the gift of prophecy and of penetrating the most hidden recesses of the heart. The following incident sufficiently proves what we assert. Totila, king of the Goths, had heard that St. Benedict could see what was passing in the souls of men, and was curious to ascertain the truth of this report. He sent to him Riccius, one of his courtiers, attired in regal robes and with a kingly escort, and ordered him to play the part of the king. As soon, however, as the holy Abbot saw Riccius, he said to him: "Put off, my son, those robes which you wear: they belong to another." Totila, on being informed of this, was more than ever anxious to see Benedict, and he proceeded to the monastery. On coming into the presence of the Saint, a great terror seized the King, and he fell on his knees.

St. Benedict raised him from the ground, and reproached him with his great cruelties, adding: "You have done a great deal of mischief, and you will do still more. Stop in your career of sin. You will capture Rome and cross the sea. You will live nine years, but in the tenth, death will overtake you." All these predictions were verified.

Notwithstanding the many graces and gifts with which the Almighty had loaded St. Benedict; notwithstanding the great veneration in which he was held by all, he was a perfect model of humility, and was ready to engage in the most menial duties of the monastery. He foretold the day of his death, and prepared himself for its approach by great austerities, prayer, and good works. He caused his grave to be opened six days before his death. He now fell ill of a fever, which did not, however, cause any apprehension. On the last day he asked to be carried to the church, and, after receiving the blessed body and blood of our Lord, he calmly expired in the arms of his disciples, with his eyes and hands lifted up to heaven. He had reached the age of 63. Before his death, he had the consolation of seeing his order established in Sicily, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and the whole West. At the moment of his dissolution, two holy monks beheld his soul, covered with a precious mantle, rising along a brilliantly lighted path towards heaven, and heard the words: "This is the way on which Benedict, the beloved of the Lord, ascended into heaven."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

1. "You have done a great deal of mischief, and you will do more. Stop in your career of sin." These are the words which St. Benedict addressed to the impious Totila. Apply them to yourself. You have committed sins enough, perhaps even now your conscience is burdened with them. Stop sinning, and begin to do penance, to amend your wicked ways. I cannot promise you as many years as St. Benedict prophesied to Totila—nay, not even as many hours. Therefore you ought to begin sooner to do penance and correct your life, because you are ignorant of the hour of your death. "Life is miserable and death uncertain," cries out St. Augustine; "if death comes upon us unawares, how shall we depart from this world, and whither shall we go?" Whither shall you go if you die impenitent in your sins? Certainly, into hell. Is it possible that you are convinced of this, and still do not stop sinning, nor even think of doing penance for your past crimes? I am sure that you do not wish to continue in sin until the end. You have the intention of doing penance before your death, of making your peace with God, and recovering His grace and friendship. But listen to the question which St. Basil puts to you: "If sin is good and useful, why do you not wish to persevere in it to the end? But if it is bad and in-

jurious, why do you cling to it so long? When you aspire to the friendship of some one, you endeavor, by favors, politeness and services, to render him well disposed towards you. You do and say what is pleasing to him. But in aspiring to the friendship of God, in seeking to appease Him, and desiring to behold the Divine Vision, you act in a manner altogether different; you offend Him by continuing to commit sin. Do you dare to hope that you will be admitted to His friendship and vision by this course?" Now, what is your answer? If you act like a man of sense, you will follow the advice of St. Benedict: "Stop your career of sin." Do not postpone the practice of penance. "Behold," says St. Ephrem, "the gate of penance is still open; sinner, make haste before it is closed." Reconcile yourself with an offended God, and seek His grace and friendship by a better life.

II. The luminous road on which St. Benedict ascended to heaven, signifies his life richly freighted with virtues and merits; through these he reached heaven. How do you live? Do you flatter yourself that, because you are not, like others, guilty of enormous crimes, you can enter heaven without virtues or good works? You deceive yourself to your eternal ruin. Remember well: Protestants deceive themselves in thinking that they will be saved by faith alone, without good works. For, as St. Augustine teaches: "If faith alone is sufficient for salvation, then God has given us His commandments in vain; and He has enjoined us in vain to keep them. Neither do I see why Christ said: 'If thou wilt enter life, keep the commandments,' (Matt. xix.) if we can enter life, without keeping the command-

ments, by faith alone, which is dead without good works. And how again can those words be true, which Christ, the Judge, addresses to those on His left: 'Depart from me into everlasting fire, etc.' He does not chastise them for not believing, but because they have not performed any good works." Moreover, many Catholics delude themselves with the thought, that though living in sin, yet they may expect to be saved, simply because they are Catholics, and possess the true Faith. St. Pacianus says of them: "What is the use of believing as a Catholic, whilst living like a pagan?" St. Chrysostom likewise writes: "The true Faith does not benefit a Christian, if he does not conform his life to its tenets." The words of St. Augustine, above quoted, may be applied to Catholics as well as to non-Catholics. As these two classes are mistaken, so are those also, who hope that they will be saved, provided they avoid sin, without troubling themselves in the least about virtues and good works. For, in order to be saved, it is not enough to avoid sin, or shun evil, but good works are necessary. Holy Writ plainly teaches this with solemn words: "Turn away from evil and do good." (Ps. xxxiii.) To turn away from evil is not sufficient, it is necessary to do good. The mere omission of good works, mind it well, may bring on you eternal damnation, even if you be innocent of other sin. This is clear from the wonderful but also terrible words of Truth itself: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire." (Matt. vii.) Mark well, not only every man who brings forth bad fruit, or does evil works, will be cut down and cast into the fire; but also the one who brings forth no good fruit, who does no good works,

practises no Christian virtue. Therefore, if you wish to escape the flames and be happy in heaven, fer-	vently and constantly practise good works.
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TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF MARCH.

ST. NICHOLAS OF THE FLUE, HERMIT IN SWITZERLAND.

St. Nicholas, surnamed of the Flue, was born in the year 1417, in Switzerland, not far from the village of Sachslen, in the Canton of Unterwalden. His parents, whose wealth consisted in flocks and herds, did not, for lack of a teacher, bestow any education on him. But God supplied the deficiency. For, after a time, such a lofty knowledge of things Divine was apparent in Nicholas, that priests and laymen were filled with astonishment. In his childhood, he already possessed the ripeness of manhood. He was most exact in his obedience to his parents; never did a lying or sinful word soil his lips. He was prompt in executing the work imposed on him. He loved to guard the flocks or labor in the fields, because it afforded him more facilities for prayer, and he might be seen kneeling under a tree, most fervently engaged in his devotions. But he did not only pray; he also fasted. Four days out of every week he fasted rigorously, and throughout the whole Lent his food was dry bread and fruits. Some charitable persons were opposed to his austerity, and predicted that his health and strength would be injured by it, and himself unfitted for work. But he replied: "I recognize the will of God, which urges me to this abstinence, and I must obey. I am also assured that God can and will preserve my health and strength, as he formerly did that of the three companions of Daniel." The servant of God was not deterred from following the inspirations of heaven, but continued his fasts, and practised many other virtues. When he reached the age of manhood, his most earnest desire was to lead a life of celibacy; but yielding to the will of his parents, he wedded a pious virgin, Dorothea, and with her, lived a peaceful and pious life. The Lord blessed their union with ten children, whom he brought up with the greatest care. Twice he was called to take up arms in defence of his country and he proved that he could be a brave soldier as well as a good Christian. In camp, he omitted neither his prayers nor his fasts. He never uttered a curse or improper word; on the contrary, he besought his companions to desist from this and other vices. In

battle, he displayed the greatest bravery, and when after the campaign, offices of trust and honor were offered to him as a reward for his valor, he refused them.

In the mean while, Nicholas felt that God called him to a life of greater perfection. One day, whilst entreating the Lord to manifest His holy will, he heard a clear voice directing him to forsake all temporal things. Nicholas, having obtained the consent of his wife, to whom he had revealed the will of God, immediately proceeded to a mountain on the confines of France and Switzerland; but by the advice of a pious man, he returned into Switzerland and sought a solitary spot there. It was also at this time, that whilst he was engaged in prayer he fell asleep, and a bright light seemed to shine upon him; then a fearful pain seized him, as if his entrails were torn away. But from that moment to the end of his life, during nineteen years and six months, not a morsel of food or a drop of drink ever crossed his lips: neither did he experience either hunger or thirst. Though this appears incredible, still it is true. Two Bishops made a most minute examination, to discover whether there was any deceit in this wonderful manner of life; but they were convinced that it was a miracle of Divine Providence. The Bishop of Constance commanded Nicholas to partake of the bread and wine set before him; the Saint obeyed, but hardly had he swallowed it, when his stomach revolted and rejected the food, at the same time causing him the most excruciating pain; and the Bishop, pitying him, ordered him to continue his wonderful abstinence. He was asked how he supported his life and strength. He replied: "I owe it to the nourishment I derive from Holy Communion, and to the meditation on the Passion of Christ." The spot which the Saint had chosen for his hermitage was so secluded, that he flattered himself it would never be discovered. But some hunters, meeting him one day, found out his secret hiding-place. He then repaired to another place, which the Lord showed him by four beams of light. It was a valley surrounded by high mountains, near the little river Melch. With the assistance of the inhabitants of the neighboring villages, he built a hut and also a chapel, where a priest came daily to offer up the Holy Sacrifice. Here he spent the rest of his days in prayer, meditation and manual labor. His couch was a hard board, and his pillow a stone; and on these he allowed his body a few hours of rest. At midnight he arose and prayed until the hour for assisting at Mass.

We can hardly find words to express the wonderful graces which the Lord bestowed on his faithful servant. Nicholas not only predicted the future, but also had a knowledge of the hidden

present. He did not, however, listen to those whom curiosity prompted to visit him, whilst those who had their spiritual welfare at heart, were most kindly welcomed, and entertained with spiritual conversation. To several he discovered their hidden sins, and admonished them to do penance. For all he had salutary counsels. To a young man, who came to him in gaudy dress, he said: "If a man has a good conscience, he is well clad; your conscience would be far better if you laid aside this vanity of dress." He foretold to a young lad a very advanced age; to another he predicted a speedy death. He prophesied that his own country would fall into heresy, and the event proved the truth of his prediction. Besides the many heavenly visions which Nicholas enjoyed, he also possessed the power of working miracles. Many sick persons were brought to him, and they returned home freed from their ills. A great conflagration broke out in Sarn. The news was brought to the Saint, who mounted an eminence overlooking the town, and when he had made the sign of the cross over the raging flames, the fire instantly subsided. The histories of his life mention other similar miracles.

At last his hour was come. It had been revealed to him twenty years before. During the last week of his sojourn, he suffered excruciating torments in all his members. As soon as they were somewhat less violent, he received the last Sacrament with great piety and devotion. He then extended himself on his hard couch and gave humble thanks to God for all the favors and blessings bestowed on him; and whilst praising the Divine Goodness, he surrendered his soul to his Master, on the 21st March, just 70 years after he had received it from his Maker. His holy remains were interred at Sachslen, and his tomb became famous for many miracles. The day after his burial, he appeared to Dorothea, his wife, and to some pious citizens. Some years later, his body was taken up and laid in a precious coffin; on which was written the following inscription: "Brother Nicholas of the Flue, forsook wife and children, and became a hermit. He served God nineteen years and six months without any bodily nourishment. He died on the feast of St. Benedict, March 21st, 1487."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Nicholas during Lent eat nothing but crusts of bread and some fruits of the earth; and, for nineteen years, tasted nothing at all. The latter, I know, is naturally</p>	<p>impossible to you; the former perhaps too austere for you; wherefore I ask neither the one nor the other of you. But do you consider the fasts of the Church too severe</p>
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or impossible? Do not allow yourself to be deceived by that spirit so hostile to fasting. You are able to bear more than you imagine, if you have only a seriously determined will. If you find it uncomfortable, remember that our Saviour, who not only fasted, but also died for you, deserves much more from you. If He required the sacrifice of your life, you could not reasonably refuse it, since He first laid down His life for you. How much less can you refuse to fast with some inconvenience to yourself, whenever He asks it of you? "You know," says St. Chrysostom, "that Jesus died for you. Do you also die for Him who shed His blood on the cross for you. If He can justly exact this sacrifice from you, fasting becomes something very slight indeed." Resolve, therefore, conscientiously to observe the remaining days of Lent.

II. Nicholas, in his illness, does not wait until he is admonished to receive the Sacraments, but demands them himself. If God sends you sickness, do not imitate those, who, before receiving the Sacraments, must be entreated and admonished—nay, almost forced. This is a great folly, a most dangerous wickedness. It is folly; for the early reception of the Sacraments will neither augment your sickness, nor hasten your death. It is wickedness, because you do not make use of the opportunity which God gives you in preference to so many others, whom death suddenly snatches away, and you do not apply the time to the end for which God in His mercy bestows it. It is a most dangerous wickedness, because the disease may suddenly take a fatal turn, and you may die without the strength of the Sacraments; a most fatal wickedness, because such a person designedly remains in his sins, and purposely wishes to have

for his enemy the God whose grace is most necessary to him in his present state. To imagine that there is always time enough, is a most perilous, or rather presumptuous, disposition of mind; for it is to act as if we, and not the Almighty, had time at our command, and could regulate everything according to our wishes. Alas! how many have been deceived and made miserable for all eternity! "O wretched man, exclaims St. Bernard, how presumptuous are you, who dare to dispose of the future! Just as if God, the Master, had left the disposal of time in your power." Perhaps tomorrow you will be unable to do what you have in your power to-day.

St. Nicholas had the gift of knowing and revealing hidden things, present, past and future. The same is related of many Saints. There are men desirous of possessing this knowledge, but they seek it from the evil spirits. To this class, belong all these who either make use of, or allow others to employ superstitious practices, in order to discover hidden or secret things. For instance, one wishes to find out who has stolen a certain object; where some particular man is living; what has happened him; whether he is sick or well, happy or miserable. Another desires to inquire into the future; whether he will be successful or not in business; whether he or some one else will live many years, or be retained for a long time in his present employment; whether his marriage will be a happy one. Another is anxious to know what is going on in a certain place, or what will happen there to him or others. In order to find out such things, past, present or future, all kinds of superstitious practices are employed, which may have been read in books or learned

from others. Some also resort to persons who make use of these criminal means, such as fortune-tellers, gipsies, soothsayers, interpreters of dreams, and similar deceivers. Through these, they endeavor to gratify their curiosity. But all this is sinful. It is a grievous sin against the first commandment, to make use of, or ask others to use, any superstitious means to discover what is hidden or secret. God severely forbade this, even in the Old Testament, and expressly commanded, that no one should keep a soothsayer in his house, or consult him. For, as Holy Writ says: "The Lord abhorreth all these things, and for these abominations He will destroy them at thy coming." (Deut. xviii.)

This should be borne in mind: 1st, by those who, when they lose or are robbed of something, immediately consult fortune-tellers, in order to behold, in a mirror or in a basin of water, or by some other cabalistic means, the face of the thief, or the place in which the lost article is concealed. 2d, by those who, during what they call the sacred nights, or at any other time, attempt to find out the future by absurd rites and ceremonies. 3d, by those who, by circles and figures, the songs of birds, the cries of animals, or from cards, dreams and planets, from the lines of the face or hands, or by spells or charms, seek to have their fortune told, or inquire after future things, which depend on the free will of God and man. Those who believe in such superstitions are guilty of a great sin against the first commandment; because they inquire after hidden things through the devil. Some

say that they do not believe in magic or fortune-telling, but that they only amuse themselves with these practices. This is no excuse for a Christian. Does it not show contempt of God, to amuse and divert yourself with means expressly forbidden by the Almighty? Ought a reasonable man to amuse himself with what exposes him to the danger of offending God? Is not this very culpable excuse deserving of a special punishment? Their assertions, that they place no trust in magic, is no excuse, because they run the risk of believing what they see or experience; for the use of these forbidden practices will frequently recur to their minds and trouble them. Moreover, they give occasion to others of practising what they themselves cannot do without sin; or they do what God has expressly forbidden. Can this be done without offending God or injuring your soul? Others say that dreams and interpretations from the stars often prove true; but I assure you of the contrary. And even if they were always true, this would not make them lawful. The devil, who knows many things that are hidden, and guesses at the future, has his hand in these practices. At times, he puts into the mouths of soothsayers what they should predict, as was the case with the false prophets of old. It is for this reason, that I said, that persons who inquire after secret or hidden things by unlawful means, really invoke the aid of Satan. The Christian who believes in God and who obeys Him will beware of offending in these matters, for they are an abomination in the sight of God.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF MARCH.

ST CYRIL, BISHOP OF JERUSALEM AND ST EUSTASIUS,
ABBOT OF LUXEUIL.

St. Cyril, Bishop and Patriarch of Jerusalem, is justly honored and esteemed by the Catholic Church as one of the holiest and most learned defenders of the faith against the heretics, both by his sermons and writings. He was born of Catholic parents and piously brought up. In the reign of Constantine the Great, to escape the dangerous occasions of sin, he entered a monastery, where he led a most edifying life. In later years, owing to his great reputation for learning and sanctity, he was chosen patriarch of Jerusalem. In this exalted station he displayed the zeal and courage of an apostle. He took under his special care those whose instruction in the mysteries of the faith was defective. He was vigilant in defending the Catholic doctrine and refuting the errors of the heretics. The Arians were protected by Constantius, the successor of Constantine on the throne, and they therefore oppressed and persecuted the Catholics in every possible manner. The Holy Bishop opposed the impious followers of Arius with all his might, and was not in the least disturbed by their threats. His tenderness towards the poor was that of a kind father. At that time, a famine spread over the land, and fell most severely on the indigent. The compassionate Bishop offered all his revenues for their relief; but this was not sufficient; his kind heart being moved by the sufferings of the famishing people, he sold gold and silver vessels for bread. This act of charity served his enemies later as a subject of accusation.

It was also during his occupation of the episcopal chair, that a wonderful apparition of the Holy Cross took place. On the Feast of Pentecost, a cross, surrounded by great light and of extraordinary size, was seen over Mount Calvary. It was perceived by all the inhabitants, Christians as well as Jews, and it filled all with terror. St. Cyril minutely described the apparition, and sent the report to the Emperor, admonishing him to adhere more sincerely to Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for us, and to desist from his protection and patronage of the enemies of Christ. The holy Bishop, on the feast of the Holy Cross, took that occasion to encourage and strengthen the Catholics in their faith and to refute the errors of the Arians, who, enjoying the favor of the Emperor, everywhere had the

upper hand. This, however, served only to embitter the heretics against St. Cyril. They called a council composed entirely of Arian bishops, before whom the Saint was accused of sacrilege, because he had, as we related, sold the sacred vessels and other things belonging to the church. The heretics condemned St. Cyril, deposed him from his See and sent him into banishment, replacing him by Heraclius, an arch heretic. Acacius, a sworn enemy of the Saint, commended this unjust sentence to the Emperor for approval, and the holy Bishop was compelled to go into exile. Some years later, this sentence was revoked by a lawful council of the Church, and Cyril reinstated in his patriarchal chair. But he was again driven away. Finally, the Saint vanquished all his enemies, and governed his diocese in peace and with apostolic zeal.

After the death of Constantius, the imperial sceptre devolved on Julian the Apostate. He was favorable, not only to the heretics but also to the Jews, and was a most deadly foe to the Catholics. It was his intention to cover the Christians with confusion, by proving that Jesus was false in his prediction about the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. With this object in view, he commanded the Jews to rebuild the temple, offer up the sacrifices of the Old Testament, and observe the other rites and ceremonies of the Law. To defray the expenses, he furnished a large sum of money. The Jews, transported with joy at these orders, earnestly applied themselves to the restoration of the old temple. They had already raised the walls to a considerable height, when St. Cyril came and, looking at their labors for a while, said: "Not one stone will remain on the other, for Christ has foretold it, and He cannot fail." The Jews laughed at the holy Bishop, but the sequel proved the truth of his words. The following night a destructive earthquake not only threw down the partly raised walls, but also ejected the very foundations and scattered them all over the ground. But this was not the end. As the Jews rushed together, and with grief and terror beheld the ruin of their work, a fire descended from heaven which consumed the tools and all the materials. Others say that a subterranean fire burst forth from the earth and injured many hundreds of the Jews. But a still more remarkable prodigy is recorded. On the following day small luminous crosses could be noticed on the garments of the Jews, which could be washed away neither by water nor by any other means. Such striking wonders brought many of the unbelievers to the true faith, but others were only hardened in their infidelity.

St. Cyril lived for some years after this event, and had the consolation of seeing the throne occupied by the virtuous

Theodosius after the decease of the impious Constantius, Julian and Valens. Now he could govern his diocese in peace. In 386 the Lord was pleased to call to his heavenly reward this valiant defender of Catholic truth. All who knew him could not sufficiently admire the heroic patience with which he bore the many tribulations and persecutions suffered for the sake of the true faith. His writings supply the defenders of Catholic doctrine, even at the present day, with the most powerful weapons against the Calvinistic and Lutheran heresies. For these writings prove that there is a vast difference between the doctrine taught and believed in the time of St. Cyril, and those which non-Catholics now-a-days profess; though in their simplicity the latter pretend that there is a perfect agreement between the articles of their faith and those of the first ages of the Church.



St. Eustasius, a native of Burgundy, was urged by his noble and pious parents, from his infancy, by word and example, to the fear of God and the practice of virtue. When he saw the many dangers of the world, he left his great possessions and buried himself in the solitude of a monastery at Luxeuil, which had been built by St. Columbanus for the fervent disciples who followed him. St. Eustasius, in becoming a monk, proposed to be separated from the occasions of sin, and thus escape eternal damnation. Under the direction of his holy Superior, Eustasius advanced rapidly in virtue and perfection. When St. Columbanus was forcibly driven away from this monastery, as we shall relate hereafter, Eustasius was elected to fill his place as Abbot. Eustasius was well-fitted for this position, being a man of great prudence and virtue, severe towards himself, gentle and kind to his inferiors, very devoted to prayer, watching, fasting, self-abnegation, and other good works. He was magnanimous in his undertakings for the glory of God and the welfare of those committed to his care; at the same time displaying great firmness in carrying out his resolutions. The poor found in him a generous father, ready at any moment to hasten to their relief.

By these and other qualities, the Saint won the love and esteem, not only of the monks, but also of those who lived outside of the monastery. God also glorified his servant with the gift of miracles. Once the holy Abbot was journeying to visit King Lothair, and lodged at the palace of Chagnerick, a great friend of St. Columbanus. The daughter of this nobleman, Burgundofora, had resolved, at the advice of St. Columbanus, to

serve God as a virgin and embrace the conventual state. The father was unwilling to consent to this, but desired her to contract an alliance with a young man of noble family. Eustasius, on arriving, found the lady attacked by a deadly fever, severely suffering from her eyes, and no hopes entertained of her recovery. The Saint sharply reprovèd the father, and told him that he was responsible in a great measure, by his opposition, for the sad state of his daughter. The father promised to withdraw his opposition if she were restored to health. Eustasius prayed for the suffering girl, and blessed her; and she was instantly freed from all her ills and sufferings. She immediately executed her pious design, though the father again sought to detain her. She made such rapid progress in holiness that she is venerated as a Saint on the 3d of April. After having completed his business with the king, the holy Abbot returned to his monastery, and finding everything in its former vigor and order, he went with several monks to Burgundy, where a great number of the inhabitants were still steeped in idolatry, or were poorly instructed in the truths of religion. By his zealous preaching and fervent exhortations, he converted many: his labors extended even to his father's estates, and were blessed by God with great success. The troubles and persecutions which he had to undergo were trying and manifold, but he was undaunted. After a lapse of time, he was called back to his monastery, and on his journey, repaid the hospitality of a nobleman by restoring sight to his daughter, Salaberga. He also cured one of his companions of a burning fever.

On his return to the monastery, his wonderful patience was again put to the test. A young monk, named Agrestinus, was jealous of the great reputation which the Saint enjoyed, on account of the success which attended his labors among the Pagans. The monk coveted a like renown; but the Saint knowing that Agrestinus was not firm enough in virtue, and was deficient in the necessary qualities, sought to restrain his ill-timed zeal. Failing, however, in all his admonitions, the Abbot permitted him to leave the monastery. Agrestinus repaired to Bavaria, but he could find no one willing to listen to him, and instead of converting others, he was dragged, by his associations with heretics, into various errors, which he proposed to disseminate among the monks on his return to the monastery. Eustasius, being informed of this, endeavored, but in vain, to recall the monk from his erring ways, and was obliged to dismiss him from the monastery. The restless monk then began to criticise the rules and practice of the monastic life, as if they were contrary to the teachings of the Gospel and even

tainted with superstition. Some lent a willing ear. He caused much abuse and contempt to be cast on the monks and embittered many against them. A council of Bishops was convoked, in which there was a thorough examination of the whole matter. Eustasius fearlessly appeared before the prelates, but Agrestinus was terrified and trembling. The Abbot so plainly answered and refuted all the accusations, that the Bishops were convinced of the malice of the accuser and enjoined on him to beg pardon of Eustasius. Agrestinus obeyed, because there was no escape, and the holy Abbot, whom the council entreated to pardon and receive back the culprit, embraced Agrestinus and kissed him, in proof of his complete forgiveness, and received him again among the monks. Agrestinus, however, did not rest long; he raised new disturbances and sought to excite the monks against the Saint. God undertook to punish this malice of Agrestinus; for one of the servants unexpectedly killed him with an axe, from some unknown motive.

Eustasius spent the remainder of his life in great innocence and in the constant practice of good works. His last illness furnished another occasion to exercise his patience. Not a word escaped his lips from which could be gathered the intensity or duration of his pains. After being strengthened with the bread of Angels, he breathed forth into the hands of his Creator, the pure soul which he had never soiled by a single sin, richly adorned with virtues and merits. His body is preserved at Wargevil in Lorraine, in the diocese of Metz, and he is honored as the principal patron of the neighborhood.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The holiest deed of charity performed by St. Cyril in the time of famine is charged upon him as a crime. He is accused as a sacrilegious robber, and cast out of his Church. Yet the Saint was not inconsolably grieved. It is not new or strange that the perversity of man should maliciously interpret the holiest actions of the servants of God. It happens sometimes at the present day that he is decried as an impious man, who is in reality a faithful servant of Christ. What should you do under such circumstances. Ought you to yield to excessive sadness, and leave off doing good for fear of the judgment of men? By no means. On the contrary, revive your courage, persevere in your good works, do not trouble yourself about the malicious judgments of men, as I advised you a few days ago. "Do not fear the judgment of man," says Thomas à Kempis, "when your conscience gives testimony of your piety and innocence;" and in another place: "Do not mind what men think of you, but let it be your care that God may be with you and that you have a good conscience." That is, if you have God and the testimony of your conscience on your side, that

your motives are holy, let men think and say what they please. Do not fear, they can neither benefit nor injure you; for if you are innocent before God, though men judge you guilty, you will not be harmed in the least. But if you are guilty before God, whilst men consider you a saint, you will not be benefited. The malicious interpreters of your motives and conduct harm themselves alone. St. Augustine says: "The malicious judgment does not injure the person who is judged, but falls upon him who is guilty of the rash judgment." But in what does this temerity or presumption consist? The Holy Father tells us that the presumptuous man arrogates to himself what belongs to God alone. For God is the Infallible Judge of the thoughts, words and deeds of men. He has reserved this judgment to Himself. "It is a sign of the greatest malice," says St. Chrysostom, "for mortal man to take upon himself the power, rights and office which the Lord has reserved to Himself." Do you think that this perversity will go unpunished? Listen to the words of St. Dorothy: "There is nothing which draws down the wrath of the Almighty, and imperils man more certainly, than rash and malicious judgment." Why so? I stated the reason above, but the venerable Didacus Stella repeats it: "Because the man who judges rashly, is bold and presumptuous enough to assume to himself the power belonging to God, and usurps the authority of the Supreme Ruler."

II. St. Eustasius lived a pious and holy life in his childhood, avoided the dangerous occasions of sin, never tarnished his pure soul with a single mortal fault, persevered in the practice of good works, and was patient under persecutions and in sickness. By these means he

saved his soul. You can arrive at the same goal by using the same means, even though you are not, like St. Eustasius, a monk. For, three things are essential for salvation to a baptized and faithful Christian: Avoid sin; practise virtue; patiently bear your crosses. Now, there is no state of life in which may not be found occasions for sin, occasions for virtue, and occasions for sufferings. Hence no state of life excludes salvation. It only depends on you to make a right use of this triple opportunity, of which the Saints knew so well how to take advantage. Whatever your position in this world may be, you will be exposed to commit sin. Avoid the occasions, guard against them, struggle manfully against the temptations of the devil and of men, who would entice you to offend God; invoke His assistance in your perils. You have also many chances of doing good in your state; be eager to profit by them; let not sloth overcome you either in the works of obligation, or in those of devotion. Prayer, fasting, alms, attendance at church, hearing the word of God, devoutly assisting at Mass and the other offices of the Church, pious reading, visits to the sick, are works of this class, which you can practise in due season. Lastly, your state of life offers you many occasions of suffering, either by way of poverty, sickness, persecutions, or by other trials; the many difficulties of your vocation, its cares and toils; crosses arising from the misconduct of some of your friends or kindred, from slanders and abuse. Do not neglect to derive merit and benefit from them; suffer them patiently for the love of God. By fidelity in these points, you will be assured of your eternal welfare. I heartily recommend you to set aside every month a quarter of an hour, in which

to examine the occasions of sin to which you are exposed, the opportunities of doing good you have, and the crosses you have to bear. Ask yourself, "How have I employed these opportunities; how should I act

in the future, in similar circumstances?" Then ask pardon of God for the bad use you have made of these occasions, and beg grace to improve. I conjure you, by your eternal salvation, not to forget this advice.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. GABRIEL, ARCHANGEL, AND ST. CATHARINE OF SWEDEN.

That bright spirit, whom the Almighty charged with the saving message of the Incarnation of the Son of God, is called the Archangel Gabriel. His first embassy was to the prophet, Daniel. Whilst this Saint was communing with God in prayer the Archangel Gabriel appeared to him, and announced to him the epoch in which the long-expected Messiah would come into the world. These are the words of the Heavenly Spirit: "From the beginning of thy prayers, the word came forth: and I am come to show it to thee, because thou art a man of desires: therefore do thou mark the word, and understand the vision. Seventy weeks are shortened upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, that transgressions may be finished, and sins may have an end, and iniquity may be abolished, and everlasting justice may be brought, and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled, and the Saint of saints may be anointed. Know thou, therefore, and take notice, that, from the going forth of the word to build up Jerusalem again, unto Christ, the prince, there shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks; and the street shall be built again, and the walls in straitness of times. And after sixty-two weeks, Christ shall be slain; and the people, that shall deny him, shall not be His. And a people with their leader that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be waste, and after the end of the war the appointed desolation. And he shall confirm the covenant with many, in one week; and in the half of the week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail: and there shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation; and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation of the end" (Dan. ix.). These are the words of the Archangel, recorded by the prophet. In this vision, Gabriel not only predicted the time of the advent of the Messiah, but also prophesied the circumstances attending His coming, and the fate of the temple and of the Jewish people.

The second message entrusted to the Angel Gabriel, was to the priest Zachary, father of St. John the Baptist. While he was offering up the evening sacrifice in the temple, the angel of the Lord stood on the right of the altar, and said to him: "Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John: and thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice in his nativity. For he shall be great before the Lord: and shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. And he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias; that he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, and prepare unto the Lord a perfect people" (Luke i.). Such was the second message of the Archangel, in which he clearly points out the precursor of the Messiah.

The third message, the grandest and most consoling with which the angel was charged, led him to Nazareth to the most Blessed Virgin Mary. He saluted her with these words; "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women" (Luke i.). But observing that the Virgin was troubled at his words, he said to her: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David, His Father: and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i.). Gabriel announced to the Immaculate Virgin that the Holy Ghost would descend upon her, and overshadow her, and he referred to the Omnipotence of God to whom everything is possible. When the Virgin gave her consent with these well known and solemn words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word," the angel departed to stand again before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity.

From the fact that the Archangel Gabriel was chosen for so sublime a mission, the Holy Fathers infer that he was one of the highest and greatest of the heavenly spirits. For, as earthly sovereigns do not entrust the settlement of important affairs to inferior servants, but the more weighty the matters, the more distinguished are the personages chosen to conduct them; so the Doctors of the Church do not hesitate to affirm, that the Almighty also selected one of the most exalted of the heavenly spirits to announce this greatest of all mysteries. St. Bernard

remarks, that the name Gabriel, which signifies in Hebrew, "Strength of God," "Divine strength," coincides well with the mission of the angel. He announces Christ, the Son of God, the true Messiah, who is the strength of God, who so wonderfully unites His Divine strength with human weakness. Now, the whole world having had reason to rejoice in the message of the Archangel, it is only meet for us to return thanks to this welcome messenger, and beseech him to obtain for us of the Lord, who entrusted him with this noble and consoling embassy, the grace of fully participating in the fruits of this mystery.



I will subjoin to what has been said of St. Gabriel, the life of an angelic virgin, who was on this day taken up into the company of the angels; because the heavenly spirits cherish chaste souls with particular affection, and, as St. Ambrose says, "Virginity renders men like the angels." This virgin is St. Catharine of Sweden, descended of a noble stock, her father being Ulpho, and her mother St. Bridget. The love of purity was innate in her. As a babe, when she was put to nurse at the breast of an immodest person, she resisted with cries and tears, though she never behaved in this manner towards her mother or persons of a pure life. As soon as the light of reason began to dawn in her mind, she displayed an extraordinary inclination for piety, a thing quite unusual in children, and a great contempt for temporal things. Her mother placed her in a convent, that she might learn the accomplishments suited to her high rank and be well grounded in virtue and piety. When she had advanced somewhat in years, her parents insisted on her marrying, Egard, a young nobleman. Catharine made known her resolution of remaining a virgin, and devoting herself to God in a cloister; but as her parents were determined on her marriage, she yielded, trusting implicitly that the Almighty and the Immaculate Virgin would hear her prayers and enable her to preserve her virginity. Her hopes were not frustrated; for, after the conclusion of the marriage ceremony, she so forcibly and successfully represented to her bridegroom the inestimable worth and merit of the virginal state, that he promised to keep it intact. They strengthened their determination by a vow of perpetual chastity, which they faithfully kept to the end. They lived in the closest intimacy and love, animating each other to the practice of virtue and good works.

On the death of Ulpho, her mother journeyed to Rome to visit the tombs of the Holy Apostles. An interior voice urged Catharine to follow her mother. Having obtained

the consent of her husband, she started for Rome; but on arriving there, she did not meet her mother, who had proceeded to Bologna. She immediately joined St. Bridget at the latter city, and they returned together to Rome. It was now that she made the promise to her mother of never leaving her, and of following her example in leading a holy life. The execution of these promises was now more easy, for her husband had in the meanwhile been called to his reward. No sooner was it known that Catharine was a widow, than a number of suitors applied for her hand. But Catharine answered them with few words, and deprived them of all hopes: "I have chosen an immortal spouse, to whom I desire to remain faithful." One of the rejected suitors sought to accomplish by violence, what he could not obtain by words. He waylaid the holy Virgin as she was going to Church with St. Bridget. His purpose was to tear Catharine from the side of her mother, and to carry her off: but behold how the Lord casts the shield of His protection around chaste souls. The profligate wretch saw Catharine coming at a distance, and rushed forward to execute his wicked design, when he was struck blind by the hand of God. The man recognized the justice of the punishment and entreated St. Catharine to obtain the recovery of his sight by her prayers. The mother and daughter offered a short prayer to God, and the request was granted. This fact was related by the guilty man to the Pope and the Cardinals, and convinced every one of the sanctity of the holy virgin.

The life of Catharine at Rome was regulated according to the rules of Christian perfection. She daily meditated four hours on the Passion, recited the Seven Penitential Psalms, and the office of our Blessed Lady. Much of her time was devoted to nursing the sick, attending the Divine offices of the Church, and visiting the catacombs and the shrines of the martyrs. She dressed like the matrons of the middle class, observed a continual fast, and took her repose on a hard bed of straw. Under the most odious calumnies and persecutions, her patience, as well as her meekness and greatness of soul, shone forth most brightly. In a word, her career was blameless in every respect. Satan could not brook this, and therefore tempted her with a vehement desire of leaving her mother, and revisiting her native country. With these thoughts did the devil trouble her, and cast gloom and distress over her interior. Her mother and the confessor, to whom she had disclosed these attacks, exposed to her the deceit of the evil spirit, who was making use of this means to lead her from the path of virtue. Still, peace did not descend into her soul, until heaven itself came to her aid. One night, the distressed Catharine imagined she saw the whole world a prey to

the flames, only the spot on which she stood being spared. Whilst she was tormented by the fear of soon being swallowed by the flames, she raised her eyes and beheld the Mother of God, to whom she turned for assistance. But our Lady replied: "How can I help you, who will not obey God nor myself, nor your confessor, nor your pious mother?" The terrified Catharine promised to be more docile in following the advice of her mother; whereupon the Blessed Virgin freed her from her peril. She then awoke, and hastening to her mother, asked pardon, and renewed her promises of never leaving her, because such was the will of God; and she was true to her word. She remained with her mother as long as the latter resided in Rome; accompanied her in a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and was a dutiful child unto death. She brought the body of her mother, as well as many relics, to Sweden, and after the funeral services, entered a cloister of fervent virgins, living under the rules prescribed by St. Bridget. Catharine, whose life was holy in the world, now made still more rapid strides in perfection.

In the meanwhile, so many wonderful and undeniable cures were wrought at the tomb of St. Bridget, that the king and the spiritual and lay authorities determined to send some one to Rome to petition the Holy See to begin the process for the canonization of the holy widow. No one seemed more fitted for this task than the saintly daughter of the holy mother. It is certainly something strange that a daughter should be despatched to Rome to procure the canonization of her own mother. Owing to dissensions arising out of the election of a new Pope, Catharine was unsuccessful in her mission: later, however, Bridget was declared a saint by the Church. Catharine therefore returned to her monastery, having, during her sojourn at Rome, and her journey, freed the sick and the suffering from their miseries. Scarcely had she reached home, when weakness, produced by her weary pilgrimage, and severe penance, warned her that her hour was come. She therefore scrupulously examined her conscience to discover the least defect which might detain her even for a moment from flying to the embrace of her heavenly Spouse: her soul had never been wounded by a mortal sin. With tears and sobs of sorrow, she made a general confession of her whole life. She begged to receive her chaste Spouse once more under the sacramental species, but as she was subject to frequent fits of vomiting, this favor was denied her. She resigned herself to the Divine will, humbly asking to have the King of Heaven brought to her cell, that she might adore Him, and receive Him spiritually into her heart. They acceded to her pious wishes, and she edified all by her fervent acts of faith, hope, and charity, and

other virtues. Whilst engaged in these, her soul took its flight, when she had reached the age of forty-nine. Her reputation for holiness was so great, that the King and all the Bishops attended her obsequies. The miracles wrought through her intercession equalled those performed at the tomb of her mother. Both were placed on the calendar of Saints by the Sovereign Pontiffs. O, that all mothers and daughters would, according to their degree, imitate these two Saints! then mothers and daughters would more frequently die a happy death, and enjoy together everlasting happiness.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The Angel Gabriel is sent by the Almighty to Babylon, Jerusalem, and Nazareth, and he is most docile in his obedience. If you desire to be in the eternal company of this Archangel and the other heavenly Spirits, apply yourself earnestly to obey the Lord in everything. The Archangel appears to Daniel whilst occupied with prayer, to Zachary, whilst engaged in the Divine service: he comes to the Blessed Virgin, whilst she is praying, and contemplating the Divine mysteries. If you are anxious that the angels should visit you, be fervent in prayers and in the service of God. The Archangel Gabriel addresses our Blessed Lady with these words: "Hail full of grace." Often repeat this salutation. Many have it on their lips every hour of the day; others repeat it daily in reciting the beads or in passing by a statue of the Immaculate Virgin. Undoubtedly you do not neglect this pious practice. But pay attention that you salute Mary with a pure heart and with reverence. The Archangel says to the holy Virgin: "Fear not, for thou hast found grace with God." Learn from this, that if you are in the state of grace, you need fear nothing; for the Almighty is your friend. But if you lose sanctifying grace by a mortal

sin, you have everything to fear; for you are in the enmity of God. If, therefore, you have reason to suppose yourself in the favor of God, strive to retain it; but if you have lost this infinite treasure, immediately exert every effort for its recovery by true penance. The Blessed Mother can be of immense service in this, if you only invoke her. St. Bernard exhorts us with these words: "Let us seek grace, but let it be through Mary; for what she seeks, she finds; she can always find grace, and it is grace alone that we need." The mother of God he addresses thus: "Thou hast no aversion for the sinner, however guilty he may be; when he sighs to thee, and invokes thy assistance with a contrite heart." St. Bonaventure likewise writes: "If you wish to obtain grace from God, turn with confidence to Mary, for, being the Mother of Mercy, she cannot refuse your request."

II. St. Catharine examines her conscience to find out if there be any stain on it, which might retard her, but for a moment, from enjoying the vision of God; and she makes a general confession. These are two things worthy of profound reflection. With regard to the first, I beg of you, dear reader, choose a quarter of an hour at the end of

each month, in which, after calling upon the Divine assistance, you will examine your conscience to see if there is nothing in it which can entirely exclude you from the Kingdom of God, or at least is a great hindrance in the way of your eternal salvation. If you are conscious of any sin, instantly purify your soul. With regard to the other point, there was no necessity for St. Catharine to make a general confession, because she had made it long before, and moreover she had the habit of going to confession every day, as we read in her life. But perhaps you will be greatly benefited by such a confession, because you may have been badly instructed in your youth about the sacrament of penance; often also you may have neglected to excite yourself to contrition, or failed to form a firm purpose of amendment; perchance you hastily approached the sacred tribunal, or you may have wilfully concealed a mortal sin; or there may have been some other defect in your confessions. The desire may have risen in your heart to make a general confession, but you always postpone it from day to day, until the end of your life approaches. Your precious and immortal soul deserves better treatment from you! If you find that a confession of the sins of your past life is necessary, do not put it off, but make it while you have the time. For, the longer the delay, the greater the danger to which you expose yourself. If you intend to wait for your last illness, then I frankly tell you, I fear you will derive but little benefit from it. Besides, how do you know that God

will send you a last sickness? Are you sure that death will not suddenly carry you away in your sins? Follow my advice, do what you can now, whilst you are in the enjoyment of health. Even if you see no necessity of a general confession, I would still counsel you to make it, if you have never before made one. You will read in the Lives of the Saints, that when they were converted from a life of sin, they always began by making a general confession of all their past sins. Other Saints also, though never guilty of any great sin, still followed this practice in order to purify and quiet their consciences. If you have determined on a general confession, begin by a careful examination of conscience, and thus preclude the necessity of repeating your confession. When you have finished this scrutiny of your soul, select a suitable time to confess your sins. It is very inconvenient to choose an occasion, when a great number of penitents are waiting at the confessional, as at a pilgrimage, or in some similar circumstance. If you do not know how to set about preparing for this confession, consult a prudent spiritual guide. But after having once made a general confession, there is no need of repeating it, not even in your last illness; only daily repent for your past sins. You can avoid the burden of a general confession in your sickness, by making it while in health. Ponder on what I have just told you. "I will recount to thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul," said the pious king Ezechias. Say and do the same.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF MARCH.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The festival of this day, full of mystery and abounding in grace, is called the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for the following reason: The infinitely merciful God had decreed from all eternity to send His only-begotten Son into the world for the redemption of mankind. When the fulness of time had come, the Almighty sent the Archangel Gabriel to a lowly maiden of Nazareth, a descendant of the royal house of David. It was the same Angel who, 400 years before, had announced to Daniel the coming and death of the Messiah, and who, just a few months ago, had made known to the priest Zachary, the birth of the precursor of the Saviour. The humble virgin to whom he was now sent, was Mary, the ever-blessed, who by a special disposition of Providence, had been espoused to Joseph, also of the royal line; a just man, who had preserved his virginity, in imitation of his immaculate spouse, who had consecrated herself to God by vow. The most Adorable Trinity had singled out from eternity the purest of virgins to be mother of the long-promised Messiah. This glorious dignity leaves us no doubt, that Mary was endowed with such an abundance of heavenly gifts, that she surpassed all the Angels and Saints, as the holy Fathers teach, in merits and holiness. This gloriously enriched Virgin was deeply engaged in prayer and in the contemplation of Divine things, when the moment was at hand in which God had decreed that his only-begotten Son should come into the world. According to the holy Fathers, Mary was at that very moment sending her sighs and prayers to the Throne of the Most High, beseeching the Eternal Father to send down from heaven the long-expected Messiah. And behold, before her stood the Archangel Gabriel, surrounded by celestial lustre, and spoke to her: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women" (Luke i.). Mary, hearing these words, was troubled, and thought within herself, "what manner of salutation this should be." And the Angel said to her: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David, his father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i.).

It is impossible to express the interior emotions and feelings which these words produced in the heart of the most humble and most pure Virgin. Amazed that she had been selected for the accomplishment of this sublime mystery, she inquired of the Angel: "How shall this be done, because I know no man?" (Luke i.) These words do not betray a doubt on her part that the event announced was possible or would take place. This is plain from the words which St. Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, addressed to Mary: "Blessed art thou that hast believed." (Luke i.) But it showed the humility of the purest Virgin who could not comprehend how the Infinite Majesty would cast His eyes on her, for the accomplishment of this mystery. On the other hand, it shows her intense love of purity and virginity, which she had vowed to God, and which she thought was endangered by her becoming a mother. Hence she thought it necessary to ask, how, with her vow, she could be a mother. The Angel declared to her, that she would be a mother, whilst observing her vow and still remaining a Virgin. And the Angel answering, said to her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." (Luke i.) By this assurance, the Immaculate Virgin was freed from all anxiety about the highly prized treasure of her virginity. She fell on her knees, and humbling herself, said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke i.) At the same instant, a most beautifully endowed body was formed by the Holy Ghost out of the substance of Mary, and a still more beautiful soul infused into this body; and the body and soul joined to the second person of the Blessed Trinity. In this manner did the Eternal Word, the true Son of God, become also true man. Thus did the Son of God utterly abase himself to redeem the world, taking the form of a servant; whilst Mary was exalted to the greatest dignity, by becoming the mother of the King of heaven and earth. The Son of God became true man, whilst continuing to be true God; Mary became a true mother, whilst continuing to be a true virgin. What a grand and incomprehensible mystery! What a fountain of joy for our souls!

The holy Fathers unanimously teach, that this is the grandest mystery that was ever accomplished from the beginning of time; a mystery, incomprehensible alike to the angelic intellect and to human reason; a mystery, in which are manifested the greatest attributes of God, but especially His Infinite wisdom, love and goodness: His wisdom, because no created mind could ever invent so wonderful a means, by which an offended God might be appeased: the infinite wisdom of God alone could

devise it: His love and goodness, because what took place on that day, was the effect of the love and goodness of God towards man. The Eternal Father out of love for us, sent His only-begotten Son to redeem the world. The Son of God descends from heaven, assumes our nature, in order to redeem us, out of love for us. The Holy Ghost forms that body, which later was sacrificed on the cross for our redemption, and to this, His love and goodness towards us, moves Him. "For, God so loved the world." (John iii.) What an incomprehensible and inestimable love! What a happy and blessed day, in which the Triune God manifested such love for us! It is well known how the patriarchs, the prophets, and the just of the Old Law sighed for the advent of the Messiah; how earnestly they prayed for it; how they called upon heaven to send Him down, on the earth to bring Him forth. "Send whom thou wilt send" (Exod. iv.) "Show us Thy salvation." "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour" (Isai. xlv.) These are the prayers of the just. On this day, their sighs and prayers are fulfilled; their desires granted. The Messiah, promised shortly after the creation, the long expected and ardently desired Redeemer has come into the world, and reposes in the virginal bosom of Mary. A few months later, he will be born in a stable, and in due time he will redeem the world by his passion and death.

What infinite thanks do we not owe to the Infinite Goodness of God on this day, for the incomprehensible benefit bestowed on us! The Angels of heaven most reverentially adored the Son of God, at the instant of his conception in the purest body of the Virgin, as St. Paul tells us in his Epistle to the Hebrews. How much more reason have we to do the same, not only to-day, but every day of our lives! We should do this at Mass, and when the Angelus bell rings, in the morning, at noon and at night. At Mass, you daily hear the words of the Gospel: "and the Word was made flesh," (John i.) at which words, the priest bends the knee to the ground; he does the same at the words of the Creed, "and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost . . . and was made man." By this, the Church wishes to remind us of this great mystery of the Incarnation, and invite us to gratitude and thanksgiving, as also to teach us how great our devotion and reverence should be. By the triple ringing of the bells, she likewise calls this mystery to our recollection and urges us to be thankful to the Lord for it. Obstinate heretics, incredulous Jews and pagans, and, alas! ungrateful Catholics are the only ones who despise and reject so holy a usage of the Church.

Besides giving thanks, on this day to the Almighty, for the

inestimable benefit of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, we should also conceive great veneration for the Blessed Virgin, who was chosen to be Mother of the Saviour. Mary is to-day singled out among all women, and is raised to the most exalted dignity. For, according to St. Anselm and St. Ambrose, to be the Mother of God, is the greatest elevation of which a creature is capable. As Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin is above the Angels and Archangels, and all the choirs of heavenly spirits; above the patriarchs and prophets; above the apostles and martyrs; in a word, above all the Saints: hence she is called the Queen of all Saints. What veneration does not then the Divine Mother merit from us, since she has been raised above all created beings! Who can dare to place her on the same level with other creatures, or perhaps even below them, as some fanatical heretics in their malice have done? If God Himself honored Mary, by bestowing this great dignity on her, how can the puny reason of man call in question the lawfulness of the honor we render to Mary, or the claims of the Divine Mother to our homage? Truly, the mother of an earthly monarch deserves to be respected and honored by the subjects of her son: why not then the Mother of the great Sovereign of heaven and earth? He who would assert that it is not allowed to reverence the mother of a king, would be considered a fool. What must we then say of those who judge and speak slightly of the honor paid to the Mother of the King of kings? To say and think that we encroach on the honor due to God, by honoring his Blessed Mother, is absurd; for, as St. Bernard says: "Undoubtedly, the honor paid to Mary falls back upon her Son." A son is honored by the respect shown to his mother; and the veneration bestowed on her, he considers conferred on himself; the injury also, and abuse heaped on his mother, he feels as if they were intended for his own person. What we have said about the homage paid to Mary, we may apply also to her mediation. It is certainly reasonable and lawful to beg the intercession of an earthly mother in our favor, because we know her influence to be greater than that of ordinary persons. Now, Mary is the Mother of the King of heaven; therefore, it must be reasonable and lawful to ask her mediation with God. Her intercession must be powerful, and will obtain us grace more readily than if we addressed ourselves directly to God. How infatuated and wicked are they who despise and reject the invocation of the Mother of God! True Catholics have, at all times, delighted in glorifying the Immaculate Virgin, and have devoutly venerated her, and with the greatest confidence, invoked her assistance in all their needs. Range yourself, dear Christian reader, by the side of the devoted worshippers of Mary.

As an additional motive to increase your confidence in Mary, remember that, on this day, when she was elevated to the dignity of Mother of the Eternal Son of God, she also became our mother. For, in the Incarnation, the Son of God deigned to become our brother. This is what St. Anselm shows us, when he addresses the Blessed Virgin: "If your Son is our brother, are you not also our mother? If Christ is the elder brother of the faithful, is not she, who has given him birth, also the mother of the faithful?" If the Divine Mother is also your mother, you have abundant reason to honor her and invoke her with filial confidence. A dutiful child knows its mother and has recourse to her in all its doubts and troubles, because it is aware that no one is more ready to help it than the mother. Let this be your conduct towards her, who, being the Mother of God, is also your mother.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. To-day God manifests his love for men: it is his day of love. For our sake, the Eternal Father sends his only-begotten Son into the world. The Son, out of love for us, descends into the virginal body of Mary. The Holy Ghost, out of the same love for us, overshadowed the Blessed Virgin and accomplished the incomprehensible mystery of the Incarnation. Is it not just that we should make this day a day of love towards God. On this festival, therefore, excite your heart to fervent acts of charity, and humbly adore the Son of God incarnate in the womb of the Immaculate Mother. Remember also, that in Holy Communion you receive into your heart the same God, who deigned to dwell in the virginal bosom of Mary. With what fervor, humility and reverence did she not welcome him? What ardent affections of love, gratitude, humility and other virtues did not the heart of Mary pour forth after the conception of the Saviour? Reflect on this and endeavor to follow the example of the Mother of God, both before and

after Holy Communion. I have already told you that, before approaching the Holy Table, you must purify your conscience from sin, and adorn your soul in order to render it a fit dwelling-place for your Lord. In the tribunal of penance you can cleanse your soul; and to adorn your heart you should make fervent acts of virtue, especially of faith, hope and charity, and of adoration, contrition, humility, and desire. After receiving the body of our Lord, you ought, as the Catechism teaches you, to excite in your heart lively affections of faith, hope and charity, humility, adoration, thanksgiving, oblation and petition. The more fervent and zealous you are in making these acts, the greater will be the benefit you will derive from communion. But to excite yourself to these pious emotions, you must employ sufficient time before and after communion: to hurry from the confessional to the altar-railing, and, in a few moments, rush out of the Church, is a sign of very little devotion, and even betrays a want of faith in the real presence of

Christ in the Blessed Eucharist. Children are taught to devote a half hour to their preparation and thanksgiving. Is this too much for so important a duty? You give a great deal more time to affairs of less consequence: you devote whole hours to your friends when they visit you or you visit them. Why then are you so sparing of your time when your best friend is present, and the most important duty is to be performed?

II. The Blessed Virgin is visited by the Angel whilst she is praying in her closet. Souls that love chastity and purity are not often met in the streets, nor do they frequent lascivious dances; neither can they be found at nightly assemblies, nor in dangerous company with persons of the opposite sex. They seek prayer, work and spiritual reading rather than vain amusements and useless visits. Mary is troubled by the salutation of the Angel who appears in the form of a young man; she does not even reply to his first address. Pure and chaste souls ought to be timid and careful when they receive visits from persons of the opposite sex. The Virgin Mary

is willing to sacrifice the great dignity of Mother of God, if her virginity is to suffer in the least from it. Chaste souls should value their purity above every price, and lose life rather than chastity. To-day Mary becomes the Mother of the Son of God. Rejoice in the great favor bestowed on her. Honor and love her with the affection of a child, and fly to her in all your needs, as to a tender mother. But if you desire to honor and love her, imitate her virtues. "Love Mary whom you honor," writes St Jerome, "and honor her whom you love." You will honor and love her by imitating her example with your whole heart." St. Bernard says the same: "If you love Mary, if you wish to be acceptable to her, follow her example." This imitation of Mary is the most powerful means to win her love and draw upon you her maternal protection. For, St. Bernard assures us, that the Blessed Virgin loves those who love her; she hastens to succor those who invoke her, but especially those who take her for their model, in the practice of purity and humility, and place their entire confidence in her Divine Son.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. LUDGER, BISHOP OF MUNSTER.

About the year of Christ 741, St. Ludger was born of parents of noble rank and exemplary piety. He became the first bishop of Munster and the indefatigable Apostle of Saxony. At the age of thirteen, he was sent to Utrecht and entrusted to the care of St. Gregory, the disciple of St. Boniface, by whom he was instructed in knowledge and virtue. From Utrecht he passed into England with Alubert, an Englishman, and studied for a year under the celebrated Alcuin and was ordained deacon. He then returned to Utrecht, but soon went to

England again to study four years longer under Alcuin. Being now well-grounded in learning he retraced his steps to Utrecht, whence Alberick, the successor of St. Gregory, sent him into the Canton of Upper Issel, to rebuild the church of Deventer which had been destroyed by the pagan Saxons. He succeeded in his mission and converted many unbelievers to the true faith. The bishop then took him to Cologne and, having raised him to the priesthood, sent him to the country in which St. Boniface had been slain, in order to bring the idolaters to the knowledge of the Catholic faith. St. Ludger undertook the work with apostolic zeal and continued his labor to the spiritual welfare of the inhabitants, until the pagan Duke Wittikind drove him and other priests from the country. Improving the occasion, he repaired to Rome and thence to Monte Cassino, where he lived for a time with the monks, offering to God many prayers and penances for the conversion of the heathens.

As soon as he had been informed of the conversion of the Duke Wittikind, he hastened to the scene of his former missionary labors. God blessed his zeal, and five Cantons of Friesland, bordering on the sea, were entirely subjected to the yoke of the Gospel, many temples of the idols destroyed, and, in their place, churches built to the honor of the true God. This success induced the Emperor Charlemagne, with the consent of the Pope, to appoint Ludger bishop of Munster. The humble and zealous servant of God resisted, but he was obliged to submit and was consecrated by the Archbishop of Cologne. Not wishing to be deaf to the voice of God, he now turned all his efforts to the faithful discharge of the duties incumbent on a bishop. He founded monasteries in various parts of his diocese, among which were those of Werden and Helmstad, in order to form worthy laborers for the vineyard of the Lord. By continually preaching and teaching, he sought to guide his flock in the path of virtue, and gather into the fold those who were still straying in the wilderness of paganism. He was kind and affable towards all, but particularly to the poor; towards himself however he was most harsh; he fasted almost constantly and always wore a hair-shirt. Though obliged to be present at banquets, he knew how to avoid artfully all dainties and delicacies. To his own table, he always invited beggars, whom he treated most kindly. During the meals he entertained his guests with spiritual conversation or had some pious book read. He had been, even in his youth, exceedingly fond of spiritual books, and he always carried one in his hand.

Some hard-hearted persons were displeased with the holy bishop's generosity to the poor, on whom he lavished all his

revenues. He was therefore accused before Charlemagne of wasting the episcopal income. The emperor sent a chamberlain to summon the bishop into his presence. He was reciting his breviary when the imperial messenger arrived, and told him that he would follow him as soon as his prayer was finished. The summons was brought a second and a third time, yet the Saint did not go until he had completed his prayers. The informers made use of the occasion and accused Ludger of contempt for the emperor. On his entrance, Charlemagne asked him, why he did not immediately obey the command. The holy man replied: "Sire, pardon me, if I think that we must prefer God to man; your majesty recommended this to me, at my consecration; hence I did not judge it proper to interrupt the service of God in order to appear before you. But as soon as I had fulfilled my duty to God, I did not delay a moment to obey your royal will." This answer made so favorable an impression on the emperor, that he looked upon it as a complete justification of his conduct in every particular laid to his charge, and accordingly dismissed him most honorably, with the single request that he would continue his zealous labors for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The Saint faithfully acceded to the emperor's wishes. For, though his body had been weakened by penances and apostolic labors, he did not desist from instructing his flock and devoting himself to prayer and the praises of the Almighty. Even on the very day of his death he preached, though with a tremulous voice in the villages of Coesfeld and Billerbeck, and celebrated the Holy Sacrifice at the latter place. He was like a valiant soldier of Christ, anxious to die in the discharge of his duty; for, he used to say that he feared nothing so much as that the Lord should find him idle. That very night, he sweetly slept in the Lord, as he had foretold. Gerfried, a holy priest, saw the soul of the saintly bishop, surrounded with light, departing for heaven, at the very moment when Ludger breathed his last.

The histories of his life record many miracles which he performed in Brabant, Saxony, Friesland, Westphalia and other places. I will mention only a few. One day, the Saint was dining at a village, when a blind man came to the door crying most pitifully. As he seemed to be very poor, the bishop's servant offered him some alms: the man refused it, saying; "I need something more than alms." He was therefore brought into the room and, in answer to the holy bishop's question, he said. "Restore my sight for the love of God." "Let thy sight be restored to thee for the love of God," said St. Ludger, and the man was instantly healed, and at the invitation of the bishop,

joyfully partook of the dinner. To others he gave back the light of their eyes by blessing them. On another occasion, whilst traveling through Hesse, he saw a murdered man lying by the roadside. The holy bishop was informed that the dead man was a Christian, who, for a slight theft, had been shot by the orders of the pagan duke. The Saint called upon God by prayer, and summoned the man back to life. To commemorate this miracle, a cross of stone was erected on the spot. The influence of the Saint's prayers was felt on another occasion. The holy bishop had resolved to build a magnificent church, in which to deposit the relics he had brought from Rome. Whilst searching for a convenient site, God pointed out to him a forest on the river Roer. He repaired thither with some priests and workmen. The forest was very dense, and one of the priests remarked, that the branches were entwined to such a degree, that they shut out the rays of the sun. The Saint was not disconcerted, but betaking himself to prayer, he continued it during the whole night. About midnight, a very strong wind began to blow and root up the trees growing on the site of the future church, while those which sheltered the bishop and his companions, were left untouched. The following morning, Ludger asked the priest whether the sun could now shine through. All who were present acknowledged the miracle and the power of the holy bishop's prayers.

After his demise many wonders were wrought at his tomb, in the church of the Monastery at Werden. Besides the gift of miracles, the holy bishop was also favored with that of prophecy. He foretold that the countries where he had labored so long would, in punishment for their sins, be subject to an invasion of the Normans. Heriberga, his sister, on hearing this, said: "O that the Lord would take me away before this happens." "No," said the Saint, "God wills otherwise. You shall witness all, but the Lord will call me to Himself." The sequel proved the truth of the prophecy.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Ludger always loved to read a pious book. What books do you love to read? Are they pious books, or are they improper, heretical, immoral, libellous or obscene? Are they not books full of satire and sneers against the clergy, religion, faith, the precepts and ceremonies of the Church? What can</p>	<p>you learn from them? Certainly not the fear of God, nor virtue, nor piety; but only impiety, immorality, infidelity, obscenity, contempt for the ministers of God, for religion and the church of Christ. Experience furnishes only too positive a proof of this. When such books pass through the hands of Catholics,</p>
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a gradual decay of principle, virtue, piety and even faith is soon perceived though the name and appearance of Catholics still remain. If you have love for your soul, refrain from the reading of these books. For, even should you not be injured by their perusal, still it is bad enough to waste your precious time on such pernicious books. You are responsible to God for the misuse of time. Take the habit of reading a spiritual book; it will benefit you, and your time will be profitably employed, and will afford you greater consolation than if you had devoted this precious treasure to vain amusements or the reading of seductive books.

II. St Ludger suffers no interruption in his prayers; he will not even converse with an emperor, before he has finished intercourse with God. But what is your conduct in this regard? How often do you not, even in church, interrupt your prayer to talk unnecessarily? Do you believe that this is no offence to the Almighty? Whom do you address in prayer? Faith teaches you, that it is God himself. Now tell me, would you break off a conference with a high dignitary in order to gossip with some inferior? Certainly not; for, it is highly improper and very offensive to the illustrious personage, and would draw upon you his displeasure. But why are you guilty of this improper conduct towards God? Are you not aware that such a prayer is highly displeasing to the Lord, and

that you can draw no profit from it? Correct your defects in this matter. Avoid useless talk and disrespectful behavior in church. Show the same reverence in your conversation with God, as you do in your intercourse with a distinguished man. "When you speak to God, remember to whom you are speaking;" says St. Ephrem. Consider the place in which you are. The place is holy, because the Holy of holies dwells there, and millions of angels are prostrate in adoration. How dare you desecrate this sacred place with vain and useless words. It is the house of God, the temple of God, in which, according to the Psalmist, only the praises of the Lord are to be heard. Whatsoever you do and say there, must be directed, to the glory and honor of the Almighty. But does your vain gossip tend to this object? Do you propose to honor and glorify God by it? This place is destined for prayer, as Christ says: "My house shall be called the house of prayer," that is to say, a house set apart only for the purpose of offering your supplications to the throne of grace. Is it not, therefore highly offensive to the divine Majesty, to turn this sacred place into a resort for gossip? Think over these points and firmly resolve to abstain from all unnecessary words in church. "Nothing," says St. Chrysostom, "is more proper than silence and respectful behavior in church."

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. RUPERT, BISHOP OF SALZBURG, AND ST. ISACIUS, CONFESSOR.

St. Rupert, whom Bavaria honors as its apostle, was born about the year 560, and descended from the royal blood of France. In the reign of Childebert, king of France, his learning and virtue raised him to the episcopal chair of Worms. This city and the surrounding country, being thickly inhabited by pagans and heretics, offered the holy bishop an extensive field for his zeal. He strove to bring these unbelievers into the true fold by his preaching and fatherly kindness. Many, moved by the charity of Rupert, abjured their errors and became devoted Christians; others, however, hardened in their wickedness, not only repelled his well-meant efforts, but even succeeded, by atrocious calumnies, in driving the holy bishop from his see, and forcing him out of the city. The holy prelate did not cease to provide for his flock in every possible way; he frequently visited his people and admonished them to be firm and constant in their faith. Theodo, duke of Bavaria, though a pagan, was favorably disposed to the Christian religion, by the influence of his Catholic consort Reginotrudé. He sent an embassy to Rupert, of whose sanctity he had heard a great deal, and invited the holy bishop to Bavaria, where he and all his subjects were ready to embrace the Christian faith. Rupert filled with joy, sent some of his priests to Bavaria to examine into the truth of this statement. Being informed of the sincerity of the prince, he resigned his see of Worms into other hands and set out with some fellow-laborers for Bavaria.

Theodo went to meet him with a great escort, accompanied him to the ducal residence at Ratisbon, begged for immediate instruction in the religion of Christ. Rupert began with the duke and the nobles at his court, while he sent his companions to preach the Gospel to the people. As soon as all were sufficiently instructed, he, with great solemnity, conferred the sacrament of Baptism on Theodo, the nobles and many of the inhabitants of the city. He then descended the Danube, preaching in the towns and villages bordering on the river as far as Lorch, and advanced even into the dukedom of Salzburg; diligently teaching the faith of Jesus Christ, overturning the pagan temples, building Christian churches, and baptizing thousands of the inhabitants, and doing whatever was necessary for the consolidation of the true religion. At Salzburg, he erected an episcopal see

and built a noble church in honor of the Prince of the Apostles, as well as a monastery for the regular clergy, by whose labors and zeal the work of conversion might be continued and confirmed. The newly baptized duke munificently provided abundant means for these pious foundations, and gave his subjects a bright example by his edifying life. On his deathbed, the duke called for his son, Theodobert, and exhorted him to persevere in the Catholic faith, and assist in spreading it. He also exacted a promise from him to be docile to the advice of the holy bishop and faithfully to second him in all his spiritual undertakings. Theodobert was true to his promise and had the consolation of seeing many enter into the true fold during his reign. In order to ensure perseverance, St. Rupert sent to his native country for twelve apostolic men, and with them he traversed the whole region, assigning to each one a district, as the scene of his labors in the vineyard of the Lord. His sister, Erentrude, had consecrated herself to God by vow and led a holy life in a cloister. The holy man invited her to come with some nuns and take possession of the convent which he had built for them, and to which he led them on their arrival, that they might give an example of Christian perfection to the female sex of Bavaria. Very soon holy women of the higher and lower classes sought admittance and dedicated their virginity to God, and, under the guidance of Erentrude, walked in the path of perfection. This was a source of great consolation to the holy bishop.

After Rupert had arranged everything most prudently for the maintenance of the true religion in the dukedom, he was apprised by the Lord of his approaching end. Rupert repaired to Salzburg and conveyed this news to his sister, exhorted her to persevere in her fervor, and, begging her prayers, bade her a last farewell. Erentrude desired to precede him to heaven; but the saint consoled her with the intimation that it was not the will of God. After much entreaty, he however promised to call her soon to the heavenly abode, if God permitted. During the few remaining days, he prepared himself for a worthy and happy death. On Easter Sunday, he offered up the Holy Sacrifice and strengthened himself and others with the bread of angels, and, addressing his people for the last time, exhorted them to charity, peace and perseverance. He gave up his spirit in prayer to which he had betaken himself; his death occurred in 628. His last words were: "Into thy hands O Lord, I commend my spirit." We cannot express the grief and sorrow of the whole of Bavaria at his death; still, there was this consolation, that they had a powerful mediator before the throne of God. Erentrude was soon after called to her reward. The Saint

appeared to her, surrounded with glory, and said to her: "Come, my dear sister, into the kingdom of Christ, for which you have worked so long and so faithfully." After this visit, she fell ill and ended her holy life by a happy death. As something worthy of record it is related, that Rupert always spoke and acted with such modesty, that not a single person could be found to complain that he had heard a harsh word or suffered the slightest injury from the holy bishop.

Bavaria possesses an undying monument of the tender love and devotion of the Saint towards the Immaculate Mother, in the famous chapel of Old Oettingen. It had been built by the pagans in honor of the seven planets, which were adored as gods. St. Rupert consecrated it, according to the ceremonies of the Catholic Church, and raised a statue of the Blessed Virgin, to inspire the new converts with a special devotion to our Lady, in order through her to obtain that the sacred deposit of faith, which he had brought into that country, might always be preserved. This prayer has been heard; for Bavaria has, to the present day, remained faithful to the Catholic Church. The statue and Chapel are justly celebrated on account of the many miracles wrought through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



On this day the holy confessor Isacius also ended his holy career. He lived in the reign of the Arian emperor Valens, who like his pagan predecessors, persecuted the Catholics, and forcibly deprived them of their Churches, which he handed over to the Arians. In the desert where Isacius had, from his youth, fervently served the Lord, the persecution of the Catholics reached his ears, and sorely wounded his heart. He besought the God of heaven in His mercy to protect the suffering Catholics, and to put an end to the tyranny of the emperor. When the Saint was informed that Valens was about to wage war against the barbarians who threatened Constantinople, by a divine inspiration he left his solitude. He proceeded to the city, and going into the presence of the emperor, fearlessly said to him: "Emperor, restore to the Catholics their churches and you shall conquer in battle, and return victorious." Valens listened to him, but deigned to give him no answer; for he thought that Isacius was a madman. The following day the holy solitary again appeared before the emperor and cried out: "Valens, if you wish to overcome your enemies, restore the churches to the Catholics." Valens began to reflect on this warning, and was on the point of following the admonition. But evil councillors dissuaded him from his good resolution, and advised the emperor to bestow on the impudent prophet stripes instead of churches. The Saint

however was not to be frightened; he came again the next day just as the emperor was riding on horseback, and seizing the bridle he repeated the warning. Valens, furious at this opportunity, ordered Isacius to be thrown down the precipice which skirted the road, thinking that it would silence him forever. But God sent three angels who protected him from injury and raised him out of the precipice. As soon as he was on the road he hastened after the emperor, and having overtaken him, said: "Know Valens, that God has sent me to you. Listen to me; do not rashly hurry on to your own destruction. If you restore to the Catholics their former religious freedom, I promise you a glorious victory. If you refuse, you shall be burned to death." The obstinate man, who regarded these threats as little as the preceding ones, ordered two of his officers, Saturninus and Victor, to take the daring Prophet into custody until after the battle, when he would condemn him to well deserved punishment. Isacius cried after the departing emperor: "You shall not return; you will be defeated and take flight, you will fall into the hands of the enemy and be burned alive." Everything happened as the Saint had predicted. Valens offered battle, was vanquished and fled. Fearing to be captured, he hid himself in a farmer's hut, which was burned down with all it contained by the pursuing enemy. Saturninus and Victor now recognized that Isacius was a true prophet. They paid him due honor and built a special dwelling for him. In it he led an austere and holy life, and, as many came to serve God under his guidance, he prescribed rules for their observance. He himself was a living model of all virtues, in the practice of which he persevered until God called him to his reward by a happy death. Before dying, he exhorted all to continue in the service of God, considering the infinite recompense which the Lord has promised to His faithful servants.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Rupert never offended any one with a harsh word. This is a sign of a deep-seated meekness. How often are you wanting in this great virtue, which Christ so earnestly recommended? "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." What injurious and offensive words have you not flung at your neighbor! and how many have

you wounded and offended! Enter seriously into yourself to-day, acknowledge your faults, and firmly resolve to practise Christian meekness. Refrain from the use of rough and improper language, abuse and raillery, from curses and imprecations. If, in the evening, you discover that you have failed during the day, repent and impose a pen-

ance on yourself, and firmly propose to avoid these faults the next day. By this means you will avoid many sins and prevent them in others. You will avoid many sins, because abuse, scolding, cursing, are hateful in the sight of God. You will prevent others from sinning, because such words excite others to anger, cursing and imprecations. Thus, if you practise Christian meekness, you will hinder many sins and gain great graces and merits, for, it is written: "To the meek he will give grace" (Prov. iii.). St. Chrysostom, speaking of this passage, says: "Will not God bestow his grace on those who fast, who live a pure life, give alms, and practise other virtues? Certainly; but the meek shall receive the greater share."

II. St. Isacius endeavored, by his repeated warnings and admonitions, to save the emperor from his fall. He pointed out to him the means of escaping his doom, and of returning victorious. Is it in your power to warn your brother of a threatening danger, or save him by your admonitions from eternal ruin? Do it with Christian charity. But

should another warn and admonish you, do not imitate the hardened emperor, but gratefully accept the warning and follow it. Let this especially be the case, when the admonition comes from your confessor. He urges you to forsake a certain vice, to guard against dangerous occasions, to shun wicked companions, to correct a bad habit. He threatens you with the anger of God and eternal ruin, unless you follow his advice. Be careful not to take the impious Valens for your pattern. Do not despise the paternal admonitions of God's minister; do not sneer at his menaces. Do not obey the evil spirit, who counsels a different course. If the emperor had heeded the advice of Isacius, how happy would he have been! but his obstinacy brought on his destruction. You also will bring upon yourself an eternity of woe, if you disobey the warnings of your confessor. For the words of Holy Writ are true: "The man, that with a stiff neck, despiseth him that reproveth him, shall be suddenly destroyed: and health shall not follow him" (Prov. xxix.).

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. GONTRAM, KING AND CONFESSOR.

St. Gontram, a perfect model of a wise, just and pious sovereign, was the son of Lothair, king of France. He and his three brothers divided the kingdom into four parts, with the agreement, that each should be king in his own domains. In the division Gontram had his royal seat at Orleans. His brothers soon began to quarrel, each one seeking to enlarge his dominions by encroaching on the territory of the others. Gontram alone was content with his share; not only not coveting what belonged to another, but even spontaneously surrendering some cities, when he learned that they were not his own. He also sought

to pacify the angry feelings of his brothers, and when two of them died, took his nephews under his protection and defended their rights. Complaints were brought to him that his deceased brother, Chilperick, with his chief ministers, had unjustly deprived his subjects of their property: he examined the matter and restored to each one his rights. For he loved justice, and hated wrong. His liberality towards the church and the poor was truly munificent. Many monasteries, hospitals and churches were either erected or richly endowed by him. He always treated bishops and priests with the greatest deference, as St. Gregory of Tours, a contemporary, testifies. At their entreaty, he pardoned many offences against his person, and even conferred favors on the offenders. His zeal for religion was most praiseworthy, and he endeavored to edify his subjects by good example. The Jews of Orleans were scheming to obtain a royal edict, obliging the Christians of that city to rebuild the Jewish synogogue, which they had destroyed. They sought to smoothe the way by flattery. The king had left his capital for a while, and on his return, he was received with the liveliest demonstrations of joy by the inhabitants. The Jews greeted him with the words of the Psalmist: "All nations shall adore thee, fall down before thee, and be subject to thee." Gontram was not entrapped, but publicly said at table: "I know what the Jews are seeking with their flattery; but God forbid, that I should gratify their wishes." As soon as the Jews heard this, they were so discouraged, that they did not even present their petition. Gontram also sought to root out many abuses which had crept in among the Catholics; he therefore summoned the bishops into council, and requested them to enact salutary statutes, and regulations, one of which severely prohibited the desecration of Sundays and festivals. This very solicitude for the glory of God and the welfare of his people, excited some abandoned wretches, who would brook no restraint, to make an attempt on the king's life. In fact at Chalons, as Gontram was one day approaching the altar to receive communion, a hired assassin rushed into the church, as if to deliver an important message to the king. In his hurry, he dropped the dagger. The instigators of this foul deed were punished with death, but the assassin was spared, because he had been taken in the church; though many were of opinion that this circumstance only made the crime more heinous. By this act of clemency, Gontram manifested his reverence for the temple of God. He was a tender father to all his subjects, as we see by his conduct in the pestilence which, beginning at Marseilles, had already reached Lyons. There was great consternation spread over the whole country at this danger. Many fled from the city

to save their lives. But the king would not desert his subjects; he endeavored to appease the anger of God by prayer, fasting and penance. He exhorted the people to do the same, and he had the happiness of seeing the impending danger averted. When the peril was past, he did not cease from the performance of good works, and also admonished his subjects to be faithful in the practice of virtue. He was likewise energetic in the protection afforded to his subjects in every trouble and need. Amalo, a distinguished courtier, had in the absence of his wife, abducted through his servants a beautiful maiden, who highly valued purity. Amalo endeavored by all possible means to make her consent to sin; but it was in vain. The chaste virgin, unable to flee from the bolted room, sought to defend herself by prayers, resistance and cries. At last, espying a dagger on the wall, she seized it, and, with the courage of another Judith, plunged it into the heart of the lecherous Amalo. The servants, who hastened at the call of the wounded nobleman, were about to slay the Christian heroine, when Amalo interposed: "Spare the innocent blood," said he, "I, not she, have deserved death." The chaste virgin immediately hastened to the king and, relating the whole affair, begged to be protected against those who would avenge the death of Amalo. The king admired her wonderful love of purity, and took her under his protection, and shielded her with a father's care. The king loved and defended those who practised the chastity becoming their state of life, and punished the profligate. Once in his youth, he had been led astray and had failed in holy purity: but he repented without delay, confessed his sin, and spent his whole life in afflicting his body with penances for this fall, as king David had formerly done. But as he could not undo his fault, he not only strenuously endeavored to to avoid it for the future, but also to deter others from the sin. After a happy and holy reign of 33 years, he was called to his eternal reward, in the year 593. Several councils which assembled during his reign, bestowed great praise on him, for his courageous defence of the oppressed, his impartial administration of justice, and great love of peace and union: for his fervor in the service of God, constancy in prayer, fasting and watching, his unvarying meekness, his generosity to the poor, to the churches and monasteries; in a word, for all the virtues which grace a good and holy sovereign. St. Gregory gives great praise to St. Gontram and testifies to miracles wrought in favor of the sick by the intercession of the holy king. May God bestow such rulers on all lands!

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Gontram was averse to ill-gotten possessions, and freely surrendered the cities that were not his lawfully. O how many lose their souls by unjustly holding the property of others, and not restoring it to the rightful owners! It is undeniable that great sins arise out of these two deeds of injustice. The well-known saying of St. Augustine is still in force: "Without restitution, the sin is not forgiven;" provided that restitution is possible. Under the penalty of eternal damnation you are bound to give back to the owner at the earliest moment, what belongs to him. It is not enough to distribute it among the poor; if you know the owner, you must restore it to him. St. Augustine says that some imagine that the words: "make unto yourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity," signify that we should give alms out of unjustly acquired possessions. But he refutes this interpretation: "you must not understand the words of Christ in this sense. If you wish to give alms, let it be out of what rightly belongs to you." It is different when the owner is unknown to you, or you cannot restore it to him. In such cases only is it allowable to give it to the poor or to dispose of it for some other pious purpose, according to the advice of an enlightened confessor. If you wish to be saved you must surrender it. Examine yourself, whether you have not in your possession something which is not yours, and do not hesitate to fulfil your obligations. Let the advice of a prudent confessor guide you, if you meet with any difficulties in this matter.

Be not one of those heedless persons who postpone the duty of restitution until their last hour approaches, or then only entrust the obligation to others. By this delay you incur new guilt, and it is very dangerous to depute others to accomplish your duty. Do promptly what must be done, and you will be saved. Do not follow those who forbear restoring ill-gotten goods, in order that their heirs, may be rich, or because they fear to experience the pangs of poverty. It is a folly to destroy your soul in order that your heirs may roll in luxury and wealth. It is great blindness to dread poverty more than the flames of hell and the loss of heaven. It is a thousand times better to suffer poverty now, and by it gain eternal happiness, than to be rich on earth, but poor and miserable in the other world. To rush into the abyss of hell for the sake of wife and children, is absurd. Moreover it is not genuine love for your children, to leave them unjustly acquired riches; for these bear with them the divine malediction, and may render wife and children as unfortunate as yourself. If they inherit from you no unjustly gathered treasures, you will have less responsibility. Recommend this matter seriously to God. Your children can save their souls in poverty, while unjust goods may ruin them forever. Their life will be full of anxiety and trouble, they will not long enjoy their inheritance; for, fraudulent wealth slips away imperceptibly and even drags along with it justly acquired riches. But suppose the contrary happens; grant,

that your children are rich and succeed in everything according to their wishes ; what does it benefit you, who are condemned to hell forever ? Meditate on this. The rich man in the Gospel left wealth to his heirs. What did he gain by it ? They were enjoying themselves, but he burned in the flames of hell. "They lived in pleasure, he suffered pains and torments," says St. Salvianus. What will it profit you, to leave rich heirs, if you lose your soul ? Be wise and provide in time.

II. The holy king not only repented of his sin of impurity, but he confessed it and did penance by mortifying and chastising his body to atone for it. What do you do for your past sins ? Do you chastise your body so prone to sins ? How

do you expiate your faults ? At least, repent daily, offer in atonement to your offended God, all your good works, trials and crosses. For this end, observe the prescribed fasts, in order to chastise and punish your body, for permitting itself to be an instrument for offending God. By doing this, you will expiate your sins here, and have the hope of not being punished in the other world. Hence St. Augustine says : "If some one asks you. What are you doing ? Why do you fast ? Why do you deprive your senses of what is pleasing to them ? Why do you chastise and torment yourself ? Does God love to see you torturing yourself ! Answer the tempter : Yes I torture myself, in order that God may spare me. I chastise myself, that God may come to my assistance."

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. AUGUSTA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

Augusta, the holy virgin and intrepid defender of the faith of Jesus Christ, was the daughter of a German pagan prince. Her father Matrucus, had quitted Germany and built a castle on an eminence near Seravallo, and subjected to his authority many towns in the neighborhood of Friuli. He was as zealous in the service of the idols, as he was fierce in his enmity against the Christians. As soon as he found a Christian, his first and only effort was to seduce him from Christ. No torture which his imagination could suggest, was too atrocious for the valiant and faithful disciples of Christ. Augusta, who was by nature gentle and tender, and loathed the cruelty of her father, pitied the suffering Christians in her heart and alleviated their pains whenever it was in her power. Her soul burned with the desire of knowing the religion of the Christians, and of understanding why they would not adore the idols. She was waiting for the opportunity of satisfying her laudable curiosity and embraced it when offered, by conversing with some of the Christians. By the assistance of divine grace, in a few conversations she was convinced of the

truth of the Catholic faith, and the falsity of the idols. The resolution of receiving baptism followed this conviction of her mind. God sent a priest to her, who after completing her instruction, baptized her. This great grace filled her soul with holy consolation, and with difficulty she concealed her joy; for, circumstances compelled her to hide it as well as her newly-accepted faith. Her seclusion in her room, when she prayed, her refusal to be present at the public spectacles and other games and amusements, surprised her father who could not account for this change in her conduct. He also noticed that Augusta sometimes secretly left the palace. He sent a servant to follow her, and find out whither she was going. Augusta unconscious of this watch on her steps, repaired to a place where the Christians assembled; there on her knees, her hands folded over her breast, and her eyes raised to heaven, she prayed most fervently. The servant immediately informed his master of all he had witnessed. Matrucus grew furious and hastily sent for Augusta; he asked, why she frequented such a place. "I am a Christian, she answered without fear, and I went to this assembly in order to adore the true God." "You a Christian," said the father, mad with rage: "are you so bold and impudent as to abandon our gods and cling to a strange and false God?" "I adhere to no false god, but to the only true God," replied Augusta, "and if you, father, knew Him, you would adore Him with me." The father, carried away by anger, could not answer; still he forced himself to speak gently to his daughter: "I know, said he, that it is childishness, simplicity and ignorance which have misled you; I will therefore give you time for reflection." He added, that if she persisted in her obstinacy, she would find in him no father, but a most unmerciful tyrant. The holy maiden assured her father that she was determined to persevere in her resolution, and that she was ready to suffer anything for the love of Christ, rather than forsake her faith. Matrucus bade her keep silence, and shut her up in a room without food or drink. As soon as the door had been fastened, she fell on her knees to thank the Almighty for the grace bestowed in the first onset of the storm: the whole night was devoted to prayer, to beg the Lord to bestow grace and strength for her impending martyrdom. She invoked all the martyrs to intercede for her at the throne of mercy. Scarcely had the day begun to dawn, when she was called by her father, and in presence of some relatives, questioned as to the result of her deliberations. "I have determined," she said fearlessly, "to remain faithful to my Jesus; neither sufferings nor death shall separate us."

This unexpected answer nearly deprived the raging father of

his senses, and he instantly ordered her teeth to be broken, in order to teach this undutiful child, as he said, to assume a more humble tone towards her father. The first tooth was broken with such violence, that all entreated the father to desist. "No," said he, "continue, until she has not a tooth left." The breaking of the second tooth was still more horrible; blood flowed from the mouth of the delicate virgin, and tears rolled down her cheeks. The witnesses of this inhuman conduct could bear it no longer; throwing themselves at the feet of the tyrant, they did not cease their importunity until he ordered this torture to be stopped. Turning to Augusta, he said: "will you not enter into yourself and lay aside your folly?" "I will not forsake my God, should you break all my teeth with equal atrocity." This so roused the fury of Matrucus, that he almost became the executioner of his own child. At the prayers of his friends, he dismissed her, giving her, he said, another day for reflection; but if she continued stubborn in her resolutions, he would show her no mercy. He ordered her to be thrown into a loathsome dungeon, and a little bread and water to be furnished her. The saint spent the night as she had spent the previous one, joyfully offering herself in sacrifice, and begging only grace and strength to complete the holocaust. Her soul was filled with such heavenly consolation, that it was with eager longing she waited the approach of day, in order to die for God. In the morning, she was brought before Matrucus, who, finding her firm in her resolution, caused her to be suspended between two trees, and a large fire to be kindled beneath her. The monster hoped that she would soon be suffocated by the smoke or consumed by the flames. But God sent a violent wind which drove the smoke and flames on the bystanders, leaving Augusta uninjured, while she praised the Lord for his mercy. Matrucus then ordered her to be taken down, stripped of her garments, and with her hands and feet tied, to be placed under a wheel bristling with sharp knives. The Christian heroine was to be slowly cut to pieces by the turning of this wheel. Augusta at first was somewhat terrified at the sight of the dreadful instrument of torture, but soon recovering her courage, she raised her eyes to heaven and called upon God for help. At this moment, an angel descended from heaven, who loosened her bonds, covered her with her garments, and broke the wheel to pieces. Augusta alone saw the angel; the bystanders only beheld the effect of the divine interposition and were stupefied at the scene. She then addressed her father, and those who were present; "Do you not see the power of my God? He has sent his angel to deliver me from this cruel torment; acknowledge that your gods are false and that He alone is the

true God, who will condemn you to eternal flames, if you persist in your idolatry." Matrucus, who was hardened, did not wish to appear vanquished, and ordered Augusta to be put to death by the sword. This order was fulfilled, and thus the heroic virgin ended her life by a glorious martyrdom. Her holy body was for a long time concealed by the malice of her father, but was at last discovered and placed in the church built in her honor, on the very spot where she had died, and where she is still honored by the concourse of pious pilgrims.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "I have resolved to remain faithful to my Jesus, and neither sufferings nor death shall separate me from Him." This was the resolution of Augusta, which she kept and sealed with her blood. You also have taken similar resolutions; you have promised to die rather than offend God. But have you not as often broken your word to God and your confessor. Now why are you inconstant in your resolutions, faithless to your promises? Do you perhaps plead your frailty, the dangers and temptations to which you are exposed? But alas! this plea will not be accepted by God. St. Augusta was weak and delicate, she was exposed to dangers and temptations and suffered the most cruel torments; and yet she was firm in her resolve. There are thousands who have given the same example. Why should you not be firm in your determinations? Are you weak and frail? You know that there is a strong God, who strengthened Augusta and so many others. He is ready to strengthen you likewise, if you are faithful to your duty, and with confidence invoke His assistance, after the example of Augusta. The holy king David, conscious of his weakness after his great sin, unceasingly called upon the Lord for help. The holy martyrs did the same in their tortures; the holy confessors and

other saints, in their sufferings, persecutions, trials and misfortunes, always had recourse to God. St. Jerome relates that in his time, it was the custom of the monks to repeat frequently these words of the Psalmist: "O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me" (Ps. lxi.). They were aware of their weakness, and had recourse to God for strength and grace. By doing the same, you will find your frailty fortified by the strength of God, and yourself, able to endure what the saints bore; not they, but the grace of God in them.

II. St. Augusta prays to be delivered neither from torture nor from persecutions: her request is to obtain grace and help in her martyrdom. "Many," says St. Augustine, "petition God for riches, transitory happiness, honors, health, or deliverance from some misfortune. But few there are who ask that which alone leads to God or to eternal happiness." What do you ask of God? Is it not true, your prayers are to obtain deliverance from some mishap, for food, health, riches and other temporal blessings! This is not wrong, provided you refer all to God and perfectly submit yourself to His holy will. However you ought to beseech the Lord to bestow on you spiritual and eternal blessings, and to avert spiritual and eternal evils from

you. Wherefore Christ directed us, first to seek the kingdom of God, even before teaching us to ask for our daily bread, when he says: "Thy kingdom come." Frequently and intently, therefore, beseech the Lord to avert dangerous temptations and to grant you the grace of final perseverance, of avoiding sin, doing good, suffering patiently and dying happily. "Above all," says St. Bonaventure, "beg of God what is beneficial to your soul and conducive to your salvation."

THIRTIETH DAY OF MARCH.

ST. JOHN CLIMACUS, CONFESSOR, AND ST. JOHN, HERMIT IN EGYPT.

On this day the Church commemorates the anniversary of St. John, surnamed Climacus, from a Greek word signifying ladder or stairs. This name was bestowed on him, because he had written a book entitled "The Ladder to Perfection." By many writers he is called an angel, a solitary, the father of hermits, and the teacher of teachers. In his youth, he applied himself with equal diligence to the acquisition of knowledge and to the pursuit of Christian perfection. At the age of seventeen, he embraced the monastic state on Mt. Sinai, and continued in it for nineteen years. His life was so full of every virtue, that he served as a living mirror of religious perfection. On the death of the abbot, to whom he had vowed obedience, he bade farewell to his fellow-monks and chose for his dwelling a spot in the desert of Thole, where he spent the next forty years in prayer, meditation and the composition of many books. He regulated his time according to the rules he had learned and practised in the monastery; and especially sought, by a constant combat with self, to obtain a complete mastery over his desires and inclinations. He was always careful to avoid the least fault and to apply himself to the exercise of every virtue. Notwithstanding his care to hide himself from the world, his reputation for sanctity was soon widely spread, and solitaries, as well as others, came to place themselves under his spiritual guidance.

Many sought relief from him in their temptations, persecutions and other trials, because experience had proved the efficacy of his prayers. Among others, Isaac, a solitary, one day visited the Saint and bitterly complained to him of the terrible assaults the devil was making on him, day and night. St. John said: "My child, let us pray to God. He is a tender father and will not be deaf to our petition." They knelt down and said a short prayer, and Isaac was instantly delivered from the temptations which had so

much troubled him, and thanked the Saint for his help. This was an instance of the power of his intercession directed to spiritual relief. We shall see now that his influence with the Lord was not less powerful in material and corporal wants. Moses, one of the hermits, had been ordered by the Saint to transport some soil from a distance, in order to lay out a garden. Moses obeyed the command, but on his return, he was overcome by the heat of the sun, so that he was unable to proceed further. He looked about for a shady spot in which to rest and refresh himself. He noticed a cave in a mountain, and quickly entered; but hardly had he sat down, when he fell asleep. The mountain was beginning to split and sink down, and Moses would have been buried alive if he tarried there any longer. Climacus, who knew by revelation the peril of his disciple, fell on his knees and besought the Lord to spare Moses. He then hastened to the cavern and called to the sleeping hermit to come forth. The disciple, hearing the voice, promptly obeyed and was saved. They had scarcely advanced a few steps, when the whole mountain split asunder with a loud crash, to the great terror of Moses, who ascribed his narrow escape to the prayers of his master, St. John. The renown of such wonderful events and still more of his holy life, induced the monks of Mt. Sinai to choose him for their abbot, humbly entreating him not to refuse their request. The Saint had already reached the age of seventy-five, but recognizing the voice of God, he accepted the office of abbot, with the desire of assisting the monks in the path of perfection. It was during his government of the solitaries of Mt. Sinai that he was induced to write the book mentioned above. In it he lays down the choicest and safest means for reaching the highest perfection. Amongst the many lessons which he constantly inculcated on his disciples, was the following: In their combats to overcome their defects and passions, he counselled them to combine their energies against one defect, and to single out one master-passion, to the subjugation of which their attacks should be directed. By adopting this course, they would by degrees correct themselves. The holy abbot had the consolation of having as many fervent servants of God as he had disciples. After having continued his holy career to a very advanced age, he was called to his eternal reward.



We subjoin to the life of St. John Climacus, the history of another John, a solitary and an abbot, who likewise dwelt in Egypt. The martyrology calls him a man of great holiness and

filled with the spirit of prophecy. He was born in the city of Lycopolis, and in his youth worked at a trade and led a holy life. He never began his work without first sanctifying it by prayer. No signs of impatience were noticed on his countenance, even when he was overladen with work. In the evening, after the completion of his tasks, he devoted a considerable time to prayer. He carefully shunned the company of those who were unrestrained in their language or manners, though he drew upon himself their sneers and contempt. Reflecting upon the many dangers to which his salvation was exposed, he sought refuge in various monasteries, in order to learn the true way of saving his soul. Five years were thus passed under different spiritual guides, who grounded him in obedience and humility, which they considered the foundations of the spiritual life. One of these superiors ordered him to water a dry stick twice every day, until it should take root and grow up into a tree. St. John humbly received the command and fulfilled the task for a whole year, without the least complaint about his useless work. The abbot concluded from this docility that John had completely overcome his own will and judgment, which is a sure sign of great virtue. He therefore released him from his troublesome and useless task, praising his ready and constant obedience. Another superior also put his virtue to the test. There was, at some distance from the monastery, a huge rock, which the united efforts of several men could not have moved. The abbot called John and bade him move the rock nearer to the monastery. The servant of God, without the slightest hesitation, hurried away and exerted all his strength to execute the command of the superior and did not cease until the abbot ordered him to desist. All his brother monks admired this great virtue of the Saint and esteemed him more than before. After spending five years in the monastic state, he repaired, with the permission of his superior, to a high mountain, and building a hut for himself, lived there in the greatest austerity for the next thirty years. To the penances common to the other recluses of the desert, he added the practice of never tasting cooked or dressed food, but only after sunset ate a few dried fruits. He allowed no woman access to his cell, nay he did not even appear before one. To the men who visited him, he imparted instruction and advice wonderfully adapted to the state of their souls: for, by the power of God he could read the secret and hidden thoughts of the heart. He also possessed the gift of miracles and prophecy. The emperor Theodosius himself experienced the truth of the Saint's predictions. For John had foretold him his victories over the two tyrants Maximus and Eugenius, and his speedy death after this double triumph. Many

also were cured of blindness and diseases by the prayers of the Saint. In order to free himself from the praises of men on account of these wonders, he was accustomed to give some oil, with the injunction to rub it on the eyes or other affected parts. He thus led many to attribute their cures to the efficacy of the oil. We shall only relate one of these wonderful cures: The wife of a senator having been suddenly struck blind, begged to be brought to the Saint. Her husband assuring her that it was the inviolable rule of the Saint not to receive any visits from women, she entreated him to recommend her to the prayers of the holy solitary. The senator came to the Saint, and received from him some of the oil, which his wife was to rub on her eyelids for three days; she followed this prescription and her sight was completely restored. St. John observed the same custom towards the sick in their ailments of every description, and their health was restored by the use of this oil.

John penetrated the most secret recesses of the heart, as was evident on many occasions. One day, for example, whilst conversing with a nobleman on a spiritual subject, he suddenly stopped, and then said: "Praise God, your wife has just been delivered of a son, though not without great danger to her life." On inquiring afterwards, the noble lord found that the Saint had stated the truth. Palladius, a holy solitary and disciple of Evagrius, had come to visit John, but hardly had they begun their spiritual conference, when Alipius, governor of the province, arrived. The holy man turned to Alipius and conversed with him a long time. Palladius was murmuring interiorly and considered himself slighted. But when, after the departure of the governor, John returned to Palladius, he said: "What thoughts did you just now harbor in your breast? Do you not know that it is written: 'They that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick'" (Mark ii.). He then continued the conference with him, and foretold that he would be raised to the episcopal dignity; and some time after, this prediction was fulfilled. There are many similar wonders related in the life of St. John, but our limited space obliges us to omit them.

The holy man had received great graces and gifts from God, he had led an innocent and penitential life, yet he lived in the constant fear of falling into sin and perishing forever. He advised others to cherish this fear and never to trust in themselves. "I have known many," said he, "who seemed to stand on the summit of perfection, shamefully fall." Hence he was ever careful to avoid the occasion of sin, he humbled himself before God and daily invoked the Divine help. It was this fear which caused him to refuse the visits of women, and even prevented him from appearing

before them. For he wished to shut off every approach of danger and by this solitude he preserved his innocence. He ended his holy life while prostrate in prayer.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. John Climacus often counselled his disciples, in their endeavors to overcome their defects, to direct their efforts against one fault and to subdue the master passion of their soul. This was a most salutary counsel. Adopt the same course: if you are really determined to correct your faults and to amend your life. You have, for instance, the habit of cursing, swearing, slandering your neighbor, you habitually yield to impure thoughts, or you blaspheme, or are addicted to some other vice. Attack and overcome one of these vices at a time, beginning with the one which is the most dangerous, for example, that of cursing. Early in the morning take the resolution of avoiding sin in general, and add to this the particular determination of not yielding to the habit of cursing, and beg of God to assist you in carrying out your purpose. In the evening, before retiring, pass in review all the actions of the day, excite yourself to sorrow for your sins from the motive of the perfect love of God, as I taught you elsewhere. Then examine whether you cursed during the day and how often. If you have kept the resolution of the morning, return thanks to God, resolve to refrain from cursing the next day, but if you find that you failed, repent in a special manner of this sin and impose a penance on yourself and determine to be more watchful on the morrow. What has been said about the vice of cursing, may be applied to lying, detraction and other vices. I assure you that by fighting in this manner against some one vicious habit in particular for some weeks or months, you will notice a

decided improvement. This practice is especially adapted to those in whom vice has become a habit; for such, this plan is effectual where all others fail. Consult your confessor and he will explain the matter more fully. "Let us correct our vices while we have time," says St. Chrysostom. "and assail one vice this month, and the next single out another principal vice for our attacks and thus free ourselves from its dominion." For as the pious author of the *Flowing of Tears* says, "In every year we rooted out one vice, we should soon become perfect men."

II. The holy solitary never allowed women access to his cell, and always shunned their presence and conversation. He undoubtedly acted in this way in order to keep danger at a distance. We may not consider ourselves bound to be as reserved as he was in this respect; but let us not forget that prudence alone can secure us against danger. Sad experience has too too often proved that unrestrained and prolonged conversations with persons of the opposite sex can cast a person into great and perilous sins, the most degrading sins and into eternal ruin. If ever you have sinned against purity your conscience will confirm the truth of my words. "A conversation needlessly prolonged," says Cardinal Hugo, "enkindles the fire of lust." Believe me," says St. Augustine, "I have seen the recluses of Lérans fall, that is to say men whose falling away is as little expected as that of an *Amboise* or a *Jerome*." If then you wish to be secure, to prevent the fire of lust from being enkindled, avoid that which will surely expose

you to danger. And even when such conversations are necessary, be vigilant, think of God and of your soul, remember death and eternity. "Do not trust to your past purity," St. Jerome says, "for you are not stronger than Samson, nor holier than David, nor wiser than Solomon.

Always remember that a man whom was deemed Adam of Paradise." Many men have been deceived of women, for women many women have been deceived of their husbands. "But therefore brethren," St. Paul says, "now you walk circumspectly." *Ephe. v.*

THIRTY-FIRST DAY OF MARCH.

ST. BALBINA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR, AND ST. GUY, CONFESSOR.

St. Balbina was the daughter of Quirinus, a Roman tribune, and was endowed by the Creator with remarkable quantities of mind and extraordinary beauty of body; her equal was not to be found in Rome. But God, who designed to draw her out of the darkness of paganism into the light of the true faith, permitted a large tumor to grow on her neck, which so disfigured her, that no one could gaze upon her without feelings of disgust. Though she was a wealthy heiress, and gifted with a lively spirit, she was no more sought in marriage. Her father tried every possible remedy to free his daughter from this deformity, but without success. He turned to his gods for relief, but in vain. At last he thought of having recourse to the God of the Christians, by whose power he had heard that many miracles had been wrought. At that very time, there was in the prison of which he had charge the holy Pontiff Alexander with other Christians. Quirinus applied to him and besought him to obtain from his God what the gods of the empire could not accomplish, the cure of his daughter from this tumor. At the same time, he promised that he with his entire household, would embrace the religion of Christ if Balbina were freed from her infirmity by the power of the God of the Christians. The holy Pontiff immediately began to pray, begging of God to manifest His Almighty power and goodness to Balbina for the welfare of so many souls. After his prayer being convinced that the Lord would show His mercy and power, he called for Balbina. She hastened to the Pontiff, she laid, touching her disfigured neck with the chain that bound her, the tumor instantly disappeared. Balbina was restored to perfect health and her former beauty returned. Quirinus and Balbina were over-
come with joy at this sudden and unexpected wonder. They most gratefully thanked the holy Pontiff, but he admonished

them to return thanks to God and fulfil their promises. They did so most faithfully. Quirinus, with his whole household, after being duly instructed, most devoutly received baptism.

As soon as it was publicly known that Balbina had been cured, several rich and young noblemen came to seek her in marriage; Balbina refused them all with a short but decisive answer, and kept her virginity to the end. She had determined on this course in consequence of what we are about to relate. Shortly after her baptism, an angel of the Lord, with a lighted candle in his hand, appeared to her, and invited her to choose Jesus Christ for her spouse. She understood the meaning of the angel, and immediately consecrated her virginity to God forever. No persuasions, no prayers could turn her from the fulfilment of her vow. She was most fervent in leading a life of virtue, devoting much time to prayer and the practice of good works. She was zealous in assisting the Christians in prison, and often expressed the desire to be of their number, in order that she might have the hope of shedding her blood for the faith of Christ. Her father soon had the happiness of testifying his love for Jesus. For, when the emperor Aurelian had heard that Quirinus had received baptism, he sent for him, and inquired into the truth of the report. The tribune not only acknowledged the truth, but also represented the falsity of the idols so clearly, that no one could answer a word in return. Aurelian, enraged at this success of Quirinus, commanded his tongue to be plucked out, under the pretext that he had blasphemed the gods. Then he condemned the holy martyr to be stretched on the rack and most cruelly scourged; after this, his hands and feet were cut off; and finally, the valiant soldier of Christ was dragged to the place of execution and beheaded. In the year 1050 Pope Leo IX, presented the relics of the Saint to Gepa, abbess of Reuss, who was then on a visit to Rome; she brought the holy body to her convent and deposited it in a Church built in honor of the Saint.

It was now the turn of Balbina to suffer for Christ. Accused before Aurelian of secretly burying the martyr Hermes, she was arrested and brought before the tyrant. The emperor sought, with caresses and promises, and also threats of the most cruel tortures, to win her back to idolatry. With this motive, he represented to the virgin the cruel execution of her father, with the menace, that a still more painful fate awaited her if she persevered in her obstinacy. The holy virgin, full of the Holy Spirit, protested her readiness to suffer every imaginable pain and torment for the sake of Christ. Then she began to speak of the glory which her father had obtained by his martyrdom, with such eloquence, that Aurelian, fearing her words would move many to become Chris

tians, condemned her to death, but not until she had suffered various excruciating tortures. Thus did the chaste and valiant heroine of Christ close her earthly career, in 130.



The holy abbot Guy was born of noble and pious parents in the castle of Casamare, near Ravenna. After having completed his studies, he secretly abandoned his father's house, and arriving at Rome, in the garb of a pilgrim, set out for Jerusalem, with the resolution of passing his life there in the practice of voluntary poverty. But God commanded him, during his sleep, to return to Ravenna, and submit himself to the direction of a holy hermit, Martin, who dwelt on an island near the monastery of Pomposa. Guy obeyed the will of God, and coming to Martin, was under his obedience for three years. The holy solitary was much pleased and edified with the earnestness and docility of his disciple. At the end of these three years, Martin sent Guy to the monastery of Poinposa in order to practise the Monastic perfection. He was in the monastery as he had been in solitude, a perfect model of every virtue, which caused the monks to choose him for their abbot. He filled this office for 48 years, with the reputation of a Saint and to the great satisfaction of all the monks. He had the happiness of receiving among the brethren, his father and brother, whose holy example attracted so many others, that Guy was obliged to enlarge the monastery. In his trials, he never yielded to dejection. He had also made a distribution of the day, so that each duty had its own stated time, but especially prayer, meditation and other spiritual exercises. He followed this order with the most minute exactness, and allowed nothing to hinder him from prayer when the appointed time arrived. Worldly recreation had no charm for him. In eating and drinking, he might be said to have observed a perpetual fast. He was a most exact observer of rules, and was never guilty of the slightest infringement of even the least of them; while his zeal for the glory of God was ever unwearied. He was most solicitous to promote the spiritual welfare of his children. For this purpose, he invited St. Peter Damian to his monastery, to encourage and excite the monks, by his fervent exhortations, to the pursuit of perfection.

Shortly before his death, which had been revealed to him, he repaired to a desert, in order that, free from all care, he might prepare himself for a worthy passage into eternity. But when Henry III. was journeying to Rome, to receive the imperial crown, he wished to have the Saint, of whose holiness he had heard, ever at his side, to consult him in all his undertakings. Guy was

obliged to submit to the emperor's will, but on leaving his monks, he gave them to understand, that he would not see them again. The prediction was fulfilled. For, after having reached Borgo San Donnino, a little beyond Parma, he there fell sick, and joyfully ended his holy career, on the following day. His companions wished to carry the body back to their monastery; and they had already reached Parma with it, when a blind man, hearing of the arrival of the sacred remains, begged of God to restore his sight, as a proof of the great sanctity of Guy. The blind man was immediately healed by the intercession of St. Guy, and praised God with a loud voice. This miracle induced the inhabitants to prevent the removal of the body, which was carried into the church, where God glorified his Saint by many miracles. The monks of Pomposa complained to the emperor of the violence of the citizens of Parma, which had robbed them of their rightful treasure. The emperor then caused the remains of the Saint to be transported to Verona, and after his coronation, carried them to Spire, where they were deposited, with great solemnity, in the cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. In later years, however, this church was placed under the patronage of St. Guy and was called the cathedral of St. Guy.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Balbina was encouraged by an angel to guard her virginal chastity. A thought or suggestion contrary to this virtue comes, not from an angel but from a devil, a messenger of hell. You should, therefore, repel it with horror. It is your duty to listen to the voice of God's angel, because the Lord speaks through him. But what must be your conduct towards an angel of the Prince of hell? Satan speaks through him, as I proved to you on the 10th of January. I ask you again, if Satan in visible form should entice you to sin, what would you do? Would you believe his promises, or allow yourself to be charmed by his flattery? You would not be so foolish: you would not listen to him; you would drive him away without hesitation, or you would fly from him; but if escape were impossible, you would resist with all your might. This should be your treatment of those messengers of hell in the flesh, who tempt you against purity. Do the same when tempted against any other virtue. You must be convinced that all those, who seek to encompass your ruin by leading you to sin, are the instruments of the devil. For, as you would spurn Satan if he appeared visibly to tempt you, so you should repulse the advances of man when he tempts you. Make no distinction of persons, be they high or low, rich or poor, noble or ignoble. If the chief of the devils allures you to vice, do you offer less resistance, than if the tempter is only an inferior spirit?

II. St. Guy made an order for himself, assigning a definite time for every duty: but especially for prayer. He faithfully adhered to

this regulation. St. Paul says: "Let all things be done decently and according to order." (I. Cor. xiv.) God is a lover of order. For in the creation, he set apart a certain order and time for the sun, moon, stars and the elements, as also for all other creatures. In the Old Law, he prescribed the order to be observed in the sacrifices, the priestly attire, the feasts. Our divine Lord follows strictly the time determined by His heavenly Father, for His Passion: hence He said: "My hour is not yet come." (John ii.) In the garden of Olives, He says: "this is your hour and the power of darkness." (Luke xxii.) If you desire to live a peaceful and pious life, regulate it according to a definite order. Determine your hour for rising, and for repose, for meals and work, but especially for prayer and attendance at church. Follow this order exactly, and do not swerve from it unless necessity, Christian charity or some other reasonable cause compels you. In this manner, everything will be easy, and you will not lose your precious time, but gather merits for eternity. A house to which order is a stranger, where the inmates rise and retire when they please, where they work one day, and spend the next in idleness, where they pray to-day and never think of it to-morrow; such a house, is like the dungeon of the reprobate, of which it is written: "A land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth" (Job x.) St. Guy was especially particular to consecrate to prayer the appointed time and nothing could deter him from it. I hope that you also have marked out a time for prayer: but are you punctual when the time comes, or do you easily forego it? It is a disgrace

that Christians, upon whom Christ laid the injunction to pray always, are careless in this important point. They daily devote many hours to the care of the body and to temporal things, but find a few minutes too long for prayer. You are punctual in taking your meals, and if business obliges you to defer the hour, you still find time for eating. But are you as careful of prayer? You put it off on the slightest pretext; and are not anxious to supply the omission. Is not prayer more necessary for the support of your spiritual life, than food and drink for the maintenance of your bodily strength? Do not take these negligent Christians for your model. On the contrary, determine an hour for prayer according to your state of life, and faithfully adhere to this regulation; if necessity forces you to postpone this exercise, do not omit it altogether, but seize the first opportunity to supply the deficiency. Do not neglect hearing Mass, whenever you have it in your power to be present. On Sundays and holidays devote more time to prayer, pious reading and attendance at the services of the Church. Follow the advice of St. Augustine: "Divide your time for the good of your soul, and allow some of it to the Creator of time, that is, to God." "Your whole day is occupied in providing for the body," says St. Chrysostom, "why will you not reserve one short hour for your soul?" "Have we not given months and years to our bodies?" says St. Chrysologus, "let us at least set aside a few days for the benefit of our soul. We have spent much time on ourselves, let us also consecrate a little time to the honor of God. Let us live for him a short while, after having lived so long for the world."

FIRST DAY OF APRIL.

ST. WALERICH, ABBOT OF AMIENS, AND ST. HUGH, BISHOP OF GRENOBLE.

St. Walerich, a holy abbot, who was renowned for the many miracles he wrought, was born in Auvergne, of poor but very virtuous parents who brought him up in the fear of the Lord. Before he ever learned to read or to write he was sent by his parents to tend a flock of sheep, and thus compelled to spend the greater part of his time in the fields. Being very anxious to learn, he applied to a schoolmaster who wrote the letters of the alphabet on a little slate, and showed him how to learn them. Walerich then returned to his flock, and with the aid of his holy Guardian Angel, whom he particularly invoked in this matter, he, in a very short time, learned to read well. After tending his flock for several years, leading a pious and innocent life, he once visited one of his nearest relatives, a clergyman in a neighboring monastery. The course of life pursued by the monks pleased him so much that he became desirous to stay with them and serve God in their monastery. Though both the priest and his father opposed him, he could not be prevailed upon to leave. Moved by his ardent petitions the abbot at length allowed him to stay and ordered him to serve the priests at Holy Mass and perform various other duties in the monastery. The pious youth fulfilled this office with the greatest care and diligence at the same time giving evidence of capacities for a much higher calling, for which reason the abbot was induced to give him the habit of the order with the full consent of all the religious. The joy of Walerich at this unexpected favor, was equalled by his zeal and application to acquire and practise all that could be expected of a zealous monk; hence, he was in a few years, regarded as a model of religious perfection and admired by all. After some years he left this monastery, having obtained the permission of his abbot to go to another monastery in which St. Columbanus was superior. This step he was induced to take because he hoped, under the spiritual directions of so holy a man as St. Columbanus, to progress more rapidly in virtue. St. Columbanus commanded Walerich to tend the garden of the monastery. Walerich fulfilled this duty with the greatest diligence and God's blessing evidently rested upon his labor. Whilst that same year all other gardens were devastated by vermin and other injurious insects; all the herbs and vegetables in the garden entrusted to the care of Walerich were thriving; so that all the

religious were filled with astonishment at it. This St. Columbanus ascribed to the piety of St. Walerich; he, on the other hand, attributed it to the merits of the former. Some time after this, Walerich finding that others admired him on account of his virtues, went with the approbation of St. Columbanus, to king Lothair, whom he asked for a solitary place in which he and his future companions might serve God more zealously and at the same time endeavor to bring the heathens to the knowledge of the true God. For, there were as yet many pagans in the kingdom. The king willingly consented, appointed the place, and had a little chapel and a cell built for him, and soon afterwards more of the latter and finally an entire monastery was erected because the number of those who came to serve God in a like manner increased rapidly. Though St. Walerich remained for the greater part of the time in his own cell, he nevertheless was obliged to yield to the desires and petitions of those who had followed him and become their superior; which office he fulfilled in the most perfect manner. Daily he visited all, guided them in virtue and encouraged them to strive for the greater glory of God by converting the people from idolatry. In order that this might be more easily accomplished, God granted our Saint the power to work miracles, to know the hearts of others and to foresee and foretell future things, of which we find many examples in his life. It is related that a criminal having been executed on the gallows, St. Walerich cut the rope from the neck of the corpse, and, by his prayer, restored the man to life. The judge, having been informed of this, intended to have the criminal executed anew; but St. Walerich strongly opposed this and intimated that he would never suffer it, unless he himself were executed at the same time. A man who was lame in all his limbs, was cured instantly when the Saint imposed his hands upon him. Many infirm he released in a similar manner from the most painful diseases. The rumor of such miraculous deeds caused many heathens to leave idolatry and confess the Christian faith. Besides this, the Saint was constantly devoted to prayer and the contemplation of heavenly things. He was very liberal and compassionate towards the poor and mild towards his enemies. His love for the angelic virtue of purity, which he had preserved without stain, was especially remarkable. He could not tolerate the least want of delicacy where this holy virtue was in question. One day, when he was travelling, the cold was so intense, that he was obliged to enter a house in order to warm himself. There he happened to meet an officer of the place and an other person who in their conversation made use of impure expressions. The Saint immediately showed his

indignation, and said with a tone of severity: "Are you not aware, sir, that you must one day render an account to God for every sinful word you utter?" These wicked persons would not heed his warning, but continued their godless talk under the pretext that it was but an amusement. But this provoked the chaste servant of God and he said to them: "I came here with the intention of warming myself, but though the cold be ever so severe, I will suffer it rather than listen any longer to your sinful words. Be on your guard, you shall soon see the consequences; but I have cautioned you." The two libertines only laughed and scoffed at the Saint. But scarcely had he left, when they experienced the punishment of God. One of them was struck with blindness in both eyes. The officer, was seized with frightful pains which tortured him until he died in this unhappy state. Both of them applied to St. Walerich, begging him to release them from their punishment, but the Saint refused to do so, because he knew that God in His justice thus punished their wickedness, that they might serve others as a warning example. Finally, having spent many years in the exercise of mortification and sanctity, after having converted a great number of heathens to the Christian faith, guided many religious to the highest state of perfection, St. Walerich was called from this world by a happy death, to receive the eternal recompense of his labors in Heaven, in the year 619, or as some others state 622 after Christ.



To-day the Roman Martyrology also mentions St. Hugh, Bishop of Grenoble. Hugh was born in France not far from the city of Valence, of noble and very virtuous parents. Odilo, his father, although engaged in military service, led at the same time a Christian life, the last eighteen years of which he spent in a Carthusian monastery and died at the age of 100 years, renowned for his virtues. Though in his youth Hugh evinced a great love for science, he was no less eager to serve God. In the city of Valence, he soon received an important charge as canon, which opened for him the road to other and higher ecclesiastical dignities. At this period, there resided in the city of Valence a papal Legate and cardinal, whose name was also Hugh. Having perceived the virtues and capacities of St. Hugh, he chose him for a companion on his journey to Avignon, that he might consult him in the transaction of his affairs. After their arrival at the place, some dignitaries of Grenoble appeared before the Legate and requested him to give them Hugh as successor to their lately deceased bishop. The Legate consented without hesitation and took

St. Hugh with him to Rome, where Pope Gregory consecrated him bishop, although St. Hugh, in his humility, was for a long time opposed to it. After his consecration, he returned to Grenoble, but there he found the clergy as well as the laity so perverted, that he did not know how to re-establish order. He therefore besought God by fervent prayer and austere fasts and other penitential works, to grant him the grace to lead the flock entrusted to his care back to the path of virtue. He then began the good work and did everything that he considered necessary or even useful in order to succeed. But after two years, finding all his pain and labor fruitless, he secretly fled to the monastery of Cluny, where he took the habit of the order of St. Benedict. Having completed his novitiate, he received orders from Rome to return to his diocese and take charge of the church before entrusted to him. The Saint obeyed and began anew with his sermons, kind admonitions and earnest exhortations to induce all to amend their lives. At length he succeeded in gaining the hearts of his subjects, and led those committed to his care happily on the way of virtue. Three years after his return to the diocese, St. Bruno with his companions came to him and asked for a place in the diocese where he and his companions could serve God in seclusion and penance. St. Hugh assigned him a place in the wilderness called Carthusia; from this place the religious of the order founded by St. Bruno in after years received the name of Carthusian monks. St. Bruno took possession of the place and St. Hugh assisted him in every possible way in accomplishing his great design. He himself frequently visited them and stayed with these servants of God complying with all the rigor of their rule. But St. Bruno wished him to return to his diocese and zealously devote himself to the care of his flock. Hugh punctually obeyed, but still observed the course of life which Bruno had prescribed for his monks, particularly in regard to fasting and other mortifications. St. Hugh was however an example of every virtue which might be desired in a bishop, untiring in the discharge of his ecclesiastical duties, gentle and loving towards all but in particular towards the poor, patient in adversities and persecutions, an enemy of every vice, especially of those which are against holy purity. He would never allow an unbecoming word to be uttered in his presence, for he used to say that he could not understand how persons who speak such words or listen to them, or who gratify the curiosity of their eyes, could remain free from impure thoughts. Though St. Hugh led so virtuous a life and so laudably fulfilled his episcopal office, he nevertheless applied to the Pope for permission to resign his dignity, because he deemed himself unworthy of it; he did not,

however, obtain this permission until the time of his last sickness. He lost his memory in consequence of violent pains in his head, so that he recognized no one, not even those with whom he was most intimate, but the psalms and other prayers of the Church he remembered perfectly well and repeated them continually during the last few months of his life. In this illness the temptations to blasphemy, which he had suffered for full forty years, also left him. St. Hugh at first was very much distressed on account of these temptations, because he feared to offend God, but Pope Gregory, to whom he revealed them, told him that God permitted him to be thus tempted for his own benefit and encouraged him to have great confidence in God; hence the Saint combatted these temptations, never yielding to despondency. He ended his holy life on the 1st of April, A. D. 1132.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Hugh never would allow any one to utter an unbecoming word in his presence. St. Walerich chastised those who made use of such expressions and, if they still continued, he left them, that he might no longer be compelled to listen to them. Be on your guard never to say anything against holy purity. Try to prevent others from doing the like as much as you can. If this is not in your power, leave their company. Should this also be impossible, then show your dislike for such wicked conversation and pray to God that you may not thereby be tempted to sin. Never doubt that it is a grievous sin to use impure language or even listen to it with pleasure. What St. Bernard elsewhere says is also true here: "Somebody is speaking and though he utters but a single word, still this single word may kill the souls of his listeners together with that of the speaker." St. Theodoret says: "He who takes up or listens to profane conversations, allows death to enter through the windows." Origen calls such words seed sown by the devil, which will bear a hundred fold in sin and vice in the

hearts of those who listen to them and the person who sows these seeds by his unbecoming language will have to give an account for the sins he thus occasions. He who loves to listen to such persons, who smiles at their language with complacency, causes such vicious seeds to be sown more frequently, and vice to bear greater fruits. Therefore, before God, he too, is guilty of the same crime. Would you burden your conscience with such a weight of sin? St. Walerich used to ask with St. Ambrose: "If our Lord, as the Gospel assures us, will call us to account for every idle word, what will be his severity against impure conversations?" A dreadful punishment waits those who make use of impure words, for their responsibility is very great. They will have to answer for the sins they themselves have thereby committed, and for the sins they thus occasioned others to become guilty of. Experience proves, only too often, that countless grievous sins have been committed by persons after listening to one immodest conversation, and who can tell how many will have to attribute

their eternal damnation to this great source of evil. To say, "I make no use of improper language before children," is no excuse before God. Although the sin would be still greater, were you to speak thus before young and innocent persons, it is nevertheless, even in the former case, a grievous sin. By such shameless talk, grown persons are often tempted to commit crime, and if this, perhaps, be not the case, such language is in itself very wicked. Many say, like the persons mentioned in the life of St. Walerich, that it is only an amusement and they mean no harm. Has it then come to this, that you make a jest of an offence against God? that you insult the majesty of God for sport? What an outrage! Would it be a wonder then if God, whom they offend, would punish them immediately, as he punished the two mentioned in the life of St. Walerich? Even if God does not punish them now there will come a time when he will do so, and that, too, in a most fearful way. They will find out what it is to trifle with sin and offend so great a God. To say that they mean no harm is no excuse, and will not justify them before God. What would these persons say, should some one insult and

abuse them in the most horrid manner and give the same excuse? Would they be satisfied? Surely not. And should God take the like excuse from them? What a folly to think so; even if it does not come from their heart. So take to heart and bear in mind what I have said, that you may not belong to those who laugh and jest in hearing such truths, lest you one day regret your laughing, and your sport be turned into bitter tears, according to the words of Jesus Christ: "Woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep." And now let us add a remark in regard to the temptations which St. Hugh suffered for 40 years. God often permits the evil spirit to tempt those in like manner who endeavor to serve Him faithfully; they should not therefore become discouraged. God suffers them to be tempted thus for their own good and gives them sufficient grace to withstand these assaults. They should bear this in mind in order to encourage themselves and should daily and with great confidence implore the help of God. It is at the same time advisable for such persons to reveal their temptations to their confessor and follow his advice after the example of St. Hugh.

SECOND DAY OF APRIL.

ST. FRANCIS OF PAULA.

Paula, a small town in Calabria, a province of Naples, was the favored place where St. Francis, who is so celebrated on account of his miracles and virtues, was born. Hence, he is called St. Francis of Paula, to distinguish him from other saints who bear the name of Francis. His parents were not wealthy, but they were very pious. They had been married 16 years, and had no heir, when they made a vow, that if God would give them a son, they would devote him to the service of Religion in the order of

St. Francis of Assisi. God heard their prayer, and they, therefore, gave the child the name of Francis. A bright flame was visible over the house of his virtuous parents at the time of the birth of this child of grace, and was considered a sign of his future sanctity. When Francis had reached his 13th year, his parents took him to the monastery in the city of St. Mark that he might in accordance with their vow serve the Franciscan priests living there. From this time, he accustomed himself to a very strict mode of living, which he ever afterwards observed. After a year, he went to a wilderness where he spent six entire years in continued prayer, great austerity and contemplation. He not only abstained from meat, but also from every other food which is pleasing to the taste. Hard bread or a few wild roots were his only food, water his only drink, and he usually partook of his scant repast only in the evening. His bed was a hard stone or the bare ground; he always went barefoot, and daily scourged himself most cruelly. Several young men and a learned priest, having heard of the pious life led by St. Francis, came to him and requested to live under his spiritual guidance. He consulted God in the matter, and, being assured of the Divine will, he built a church and monastery, with the consent of the Bishop of Cosenza. He thus laid the foundation of a new and very strict order, whose members he desired to be called Minims or Lesser Friars. To the three usual vows he added another, which bound his religious to observe as strict a fast every day as the Church prescribes for Lent. Many miracles occurred while the church and monastery were being built. Once the workmen complained of having no water to quench their thirst; the Saint struck a rock which was near by with his cane and immediately the purest water came forth. On another occasion, the workmen informed him that the lime-kiln was in danger of bursting; the Saint made the sign of the cross, went into the kiln, removed the danger and came forth uninjured. An immense mass of rock, having become detached from a neighboring mountain, threatened to roll down upon the convent with great force and destroy it. The Saint in a loud voice commanded it to remain at rest and roll no farther; and it obeyed! He performed many similar miracles while building other monasteries. When he was called to Sicily to build a convent there, the seamen refused to take him on board their vessels unless he paid his fare. After having said a short prayer, the Saint spread his mantle upon the water and sat upon it with his companions and happily reached Sicily from Calabria. These things occurred in the presence of so many, that there could be no doubt of the miraculous power which Francis had received from God. Having returned to his

first monastery, he received orders from the Pope to go to Louis XI., King of France, who was very ill. Before fulfilling this command, he was obliged to visit the King of Naples, whose subjects were groaning under the weight of heavy taxes. The King offered him a dish full of gold pieces, telling him to employ them for the purpose of building new monasteries; but the Saint refused, saying he did not desire the sweat and blood of the subjects. Hereupon, he broke a piece of the money, and behold! blood flowed from it. The King and his courtiers could not regard the spectacle without great horror. At Rome, St. Francis was received by the cardinals and even by the Pope himself with great marks of honor; but, as the latter refused to give his approbation to the above mentioned fourth vow, Francis took the hand of a cardinal standing next to him and said: "If your Holiness will not do so, this person will." This prophecy was actually fulfilled, as the same cardinal afterwards became Pope, and gave his sanction to the vow, and to all the regulations of the order. After many similar wonderful events, he at length reached the Kingdom of France. Previous to seeing St. Francis, the King sent him many vessels of gold and silver to be employed in building new convents. But the Saint would not accept one of them, but replied: "The King would do better to restore his ill-gotten goods to their lawful owners." He repeated these words also in the presence of the King, who offered St. Francis much gold in private, with the promise never to mention it to any one; but the Saint still refused the gifts. The King, being thus assured of the virtue of St. Francis, besought him to pray that God would deliver him from his serious illness and prolong his life. The Saint prayed; but afterwards returned to the King and told him that God had resolved to take him out of life. He advised him, therefore, to prepare for an humble and contrite confession and to leave nothing undone that might contribute towards obtaining for him the grace of a happy death. The King, who, previous to this, was terrified even at hearing any one speak of death, yielded very submissively to the decree of the King of Kings, after St. Francis had thus exhorted and encouraged him. He then requested the Saint to remain with him until his death and ordered the adjoining chamber to be prepared for his use. St. Francis every day spent several hours with the King, who, under his direction, made a sincere and contrite confession of all his sins, received the last sacraments, and at length expired in the arms of the Saint, after having for some time practised many virtues. The King's successor, Charles VIII., entertained such a veneration and respect for the sanctity of the holy man, that he would scarcely ever undertake an affair

of importance without first receiving the advice of the Saint on the subject. He requested the holy man to be godfather to the crown prince, and to give him his name, which was accordingly done. This King had three monasteries erected for the monks of St. Francis, and one of them was built behind the walls of the castle of Plessis. The Saint, on the other hand, by his prayers, obtained for the king two glorious victories over his enemies. Many other things which the Saint did, both for the lowly and exalted, must be omitted here. We will only say, in general, that he received the most extraordinary graces and gifts from God, so that no Saint of his time performed as many astonishing miracles as St. Francis did. He delivered the possessed, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cured numberless sick persons, and even raised the dead to life. He announced the punishment of God to two Kings, if they would not amend their lives, and the event verified his prediction. To some persons he foretold a long life, to others the near approach of death. He also told some persons they would enter the religious state, while to many others he prophesied different future events. He could see the inmost recesses of the soul as in a mirror, and on one occasion, when a certain person took him to be a magician, he whispered in his ear: "I am no magician, but the servant of Jesus Christ." On account of these and similar deeds, he was called the prophet and wonder worker of his time, and on account of his great sanctity, the holy man. A fiery ball was once seen to descend from heaven and rest upon his head; in its centre the word "Charitas," charity, might be read. This was taken as a sign of the great love of God which inflamed his heart. All were astonished at the unchangeable uniformity of his conduct, for his manner of living was as poor, as humble and secluded at court as in his hermitage or at his monastery. After this holy servant of God, who was so lowly in his own eyes, but so exalted before God and the Christian world, had continued to spread his order throughout France, Spain and Germany, until his 91st year, God was pleased to call him from this world. On Palm Sunday, in the year 1507, he felt a slight indisposition, and on Holy Thursday, he asked to be led to the church, where he made his confession with a rope around his neck, and received the holy Eucharist with the greatest devotion. He was conducted back to his cell, where on the following day, about the same hour in which Christ expired on the Cross, he joyfully resigned his soul into the hands of his Saviour. Before his end, he exhorted and admonished his brethren to love God, live in fraternal unity and the strict observance of their rules. His last prayer was: "O sweetest, O most bountiful Jesus! Thou true Shepherd! preserve the just, convert the wicked and have mercy

on all the faithful, the living as well as the dead. Be also merciful to me a poor sinner! His last words were: "Into thy hands O Lord! I commend my spirit." His holy body remained incorrupt until the year 1562, when the Calvinists took it from the grave of the monastic church at Plessis, and, by means of a rope, dragged it to the parlor, where they threw it into the fire, together with a wooden crucifix, a deed at which even heathens and Turks cannot help being shocked. But God did not permit so valuable a treasure to be reduced entirely to ashes. Some zealous Catholics saved the greatest part of his bones from the flames, and these were afterwards distributed among the different churches, where they are preserved and honored with the greatest veneration.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Francis did not take the presents sent by the king but exhorted him to restore them to their lawful owners. There are persons, of whom I have elsewhere spoken, who, when they have gathered much wealth by means of usury, fraud and injustice, imagine it will suffice for them to give abundant alms to the poor, leave legacies for pious purposes, establish anniversary days and the like. A great delusion, a deceit of the devil! Above all, that which has been unjustly obtained must be restored, before alms or anything similar is acceptable to God. If any one intends making a pious donation this must be done from his own wealth and not that of others. "The half of my goods I give to the poor," said Zacheus. Of my goods, remember well. "He does not give from unjustly obtained wealth," says St. Chrysostom, but from his own goods, that which was unjustly obtained he restored to the lawful owner. Such alms alone are pleasing to God and beneficial to men. "Such alms," says St. Gregory, "are pleasing in the eyes of our Saviour as are given from personal property which has been justly obtained,

but not such as are given from ill-gotten goods." Examine your conscience and see if you possess anything unjustly obtained; if so, restore it.

II. Have you read how St. Francis fasted in solitude for six years, and afterwards made a vow to observe as strict a fast throughout the year as the church proscribes for the Lenten season? What do you think and say concerning so long and strict a fast? Can you complain if I ask you to observe at least the fasts prescribed by the church? Are you perhaps, afraid of injuring your health thereby or even of shortening your life? The devil causes you this fear because he is the sworn enemy to fasting. God assures you of the contrary, as I have proved in the month of January. He says expressly that he prolongs the life of him who is temperate or mortified in eating and drinking. Experience proves this divine assertion to be true. St. Francis by his fasting reached the advanced age of 91 years. Sts. Paul, Anthony and Theodosius, whose feasts were celebrated in January, reached a still greater age. I ask, did anyone who

failed to observe the law of fast and abstinence ever attain such an age, and, if so, what good did he derive from it? He will only have to suffer the more, because he has sinned more. Therefore listen to and follow the advice of St. Athanasius who says: "If any one tells you not to fast, lest you might thereby injure your health, do not believe him; nay do not even listen to him; for Satan has sent him to you." Not fasting, but many other things both weaken the bodily strength and shorten life. Such, especially, are excess in eating and drinking, idleness, sleeping too long

and, above all, the abominable vice of impurity. By such actions the body suffers much more than we can imagine; the health is injured and the life shortened. Of the former we have the testimony of Holy Writ, which says: "Be not greedy in any feasting and pour not out thyself upon any meat; for, in many meats there will be sickness, and greediness will turn to choler. By surfeiting many have perished; but he that is temperate, shall prolong life" (Eccl. xxxvii. 34). These are the words of eternal truth, Will you sooner believe the father of lies than the God who is infallible?

THIRD DAY OF APRIL.

ST. MARY OF EGYPT, PENITENT.

Mary, at first a great sinner, but afterwards renowned throughout the world as a sincere penitent, was born in Egypt. Nothing is known of her parents or early education. So much, however, according to her own confession, is certain: at the age of twelve years, impelled by the desire of gratifying her sensual desires or led by the seductions of others, she fled from the paternal residence and betook herself to Alexandria. There she abandoned herself to the disgraceful, ignominious and scandalous vice of impurity in a most shameless manner, and, as her personal beauty was very great, the number of those whom she led astray by her seductions was by no means small. She addicted herself to all the forms of this vice, fearing neither God nor man, and found her sole pleasure in gratifying freely and without restraint her base desires. She had thus spent seventeen years, when having come in contact with a large multitude of people who were going on board a vessel to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the purpose of celebrating the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, she resolved to join them, hoping to find thereby new opportunities to satisfy her wantonness. Such she also found to her pleasure, and spent several days in vice. When the feast day arrived, the people all hastened to the church of the Holy Sepulchre, there to venerate the Cross. Mary went also, not

through feelings of devotion, however, but simply to see the church, and thus gratify her curiosity. What happened? She came among a company of persons, some of whom walked in front of her, others behind, and still a third group beside her. All entered the church without restraint, she alone was kept back by an unseen power. She exerted herself with all her strength a second and third time to get into the church, but was each time repelled. This strange and unexpected event terrified her very much. She began to consider within herself why it was that the others were permitted to enter the church and she alone was prevented from doing so. And behold? At once through divine enlightening, the thought came to her: "Thou on account of thy numberless sins, art not worthy to enter this sacred place to view the Holy Cross or appear before thy God." The vivid and lively impression of this truth softened the hitherto hardened heart of Mary. She withdrew to a retired place in the vestibule of the church, and commenced sighing, crying aloud and striking her breast. She then raised her eyes towards Heaven, afterwards cast them on the ground, not knowing what to do. At last, she beheld a picture of the Blessed Virgin, and remembered having heard Mary called the Mother of Mercy and Refuge of Sinners. Hence full of confidence, she fell on her knees before this picture and besought the Mother of Mercy to obtain for her the grace of a true conversion, and to permit her to enter the church, promising amendment of life and continued penance. Having finished the prayer, she again felt urged to enter the church; and this time was not prevented from doing so. She then venerated the Holy Cross with a heart which was deeply touched, wept bitterly over her sins, returned to the picture and expressed her thanks to the Mother of God, and begged to know when and where she should commence and continue her penance. She distinctly heard a voice telling her to go to a desert beyond the river Jordan. Mary now implored the Blessed Virgin to give her Her maternal blessing and humbly begged for the grace to do true and continual penance. On the same day she went to the above mentioned river, entered the Church of St. John the Baptist and spent the whole night in examining her conscience and bewailing her sins, which she confessed on the following day. Having received Holy Communion, she crossed the river and came to the wilderness, where she led a life of austere penance for forty-seven years, during which time she incessantly repented of her sins and asked God's pardon. But as she had lived in sin for seventeen years, God permitted the devil to molest her with the most violent temptations for the same length of time. But she struggled against them courageously, and, in the most violent assaults, she ever had re-

course to the Blessed Virgin, crying to her with tearful eyes; "Come to my aid thou Refuge of Sinners. To thee I owe the beginning of my conversion, oh! grant me perseverance!" The Mother of God heard her supplication. The holy penitent persevered, and was at length released from her temptations and served God until the end of her life in much peace of heart. She, herself, related this in praise of God's mercy, to the holy abbot Zosimus, who found the Saint in this wilderness a year before her death. She requested him to reveal it to no one during her life-time and implored him to come to the river Jordan on the following Holy Thursday in order to strengthen her with the Blessed Sacrament. Zosimus came at the appointed time, and was astonished to see how the holy penitent walked upon the river and advanced towards him. He gave her the holy viaticum which she received with great devotion, and then exclaimed in the words of holy Simeon: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord! in peace." After this, Mary re-crossed the river and returned to the desert where she died on the following day, in A. D. 520. When St. Zosimus came to her dwelling in the following year he found her corpse which was uncorrupted and he buried it with great reverence. A lion directed by divine Providence, came and dug the grave with his claws in the presence of the Saint.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Mary, the great sinner took refuge with the Mother of God and prayed from her heart for the grace of conversion, and what she prayed for she obtained. See with what truth and justice the Church styles Mary the Refuge of Sinners. But remember, she is the Refuge of Sinners who are converted, and persevere in their conversion like Mary of Egypt. There are sinners who never think of becoming better, who remain in the state of sin and increase their guilt from day to day. Nevertheless, they have an outward show of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, they say certain prayers in her honor, observe particular fasts, carry a blessed scapular and rosary about them continually, etc. On this account they firmly believe they will never be lost, since Mary is the Refuge. In this, however they deceive

themselves; for certainly, Mary, who loves her divine Son above all things, must with her whole heart, hate sin as an offence to him. How can such persons believe or hope that Mary will show herself gracious in their regard, when they continually offend her Son, and that in the expectation of obtaining her protection, though they never resolve to arise from the state of sin until it is too late to put their good designs into effect? Certainly we have instances, in which Mary obtained conversion when this grace was not even desired. But such favors are very rare and must be regarded as miracles obtained for very few. Though a sinner should not, even while in the state of sin, neglect his exercises of devotion, still they should be so directed if he wishes to obtain sure refuge with Mary, that they may be the means of

procuring for him a true knowledge of his sins, a great hatred for them and an earnest desire of amendment. Should he do this, he will, indeed, find that Mary is the Refuge of Sinners. "Give up the will to sin or cease desiring to sin," says St. Gregory, "and you will find that Mary is willing to come to your assistance, even as a mother, who hastens to aid her child."

II. Mary was not content with confessing her sins, but continued to atone for them throughout her life, by the practices of the most rigorous penance. As she was nevertheless severely tempted by the evil spirit, she again had recourse to Mary and humbly prayed for her protection that she might not be overcome, but persevere to the end. This second prayer was also heard. What do you do after you have been converted to God or have made a confession? What penance do you perform? When you immediately forget your former sins and do not practice any penance whatever, you give reason to suppose that your conversion was not sincere. The penitents of olden times acted far differently from this. St. John, who preached penance to the Jews, exclaimed: "Bring forth, therefore,

fruits worthy of penance." What he then proclaimed to the Jews, is said to all penitents. Never let a day pass without heartily repenting of your sins and asking pardon for them. Observe the weekly abstinence from flesh meat, the prescribed fasts, etc., and offer this to God in the spirit of penance. What less could you do? "How can we expect to enter heaven without fasting," says St. Ambrose. "Furthermore, should you be tempted by the evil spirit after your conversion, imitate the example of Mary, the penitent. Take refuge with the Blessed Virgin and ask her to obtain for you the grace necessary to conquer your temptation and to persevere in the pious life you have commenced. "When the storms of temptation arise against you," says St. Bernard, "think of Mary, call on Mary and ask her to shield you from the assaults of Satan." This is what many saints have done, and among others St. Ephrem addresses Mary with these words: "Thou art after God the only help of sinners." We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God, protect and shield us under the wings of thy goodness and mercy.

FOURTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. ISIDORE, BISHOP OF SEVILLE.

St. Isidore, one of the most excellent instructors of his time, was born of highly respectable parents at Seville, in Spain. He had two brothers, Fulgentius and Leander, who were both elevated to the episcopal dignity and are venerated as Saints. While still in the cradle, a swarm of bees was seen to fly upon Isidore and encircle his head, and this was considered as a sign of the child's future eloquence. As soon as Isidore was capable of learning, he was sent to school, but found such difficulty in studying, that he thought of putting his books entirely aside.

He once had occasion to pass by a well with a stone border, while he was engaged with this thought. He stood still and considered how the stone was visibly diminished by the repeated falling of a rope to which a bucket was attached. The idea then came to him: What a power has repetition, even on a hard stone! If the repeated letting down and pulling up of a rope will at last make an impression on hard stone, and, so to say, overcome it, why should not my head finally be able to retain something, if I exercise it continually in study? Hereupon he changed his mind and applied himself to study with such zeal and untiring energy that, in the course of time, he made great progress in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and in spiritual and profane science. At the present day he is numbered among the greatest doctors of the Church. St. Isidore applied the great knowledge he had gained to no other purpose than the good of the Catholic Church. The Arians sought at the time to spread their poisonous doctrine more and more throughout Spain, being encouraged to this by Leovigild, the King. They deposed the two holy Bishops, Leander and Fulgentius, from their episcopal Sees: whereupon, St. Isidore took charge of their dioceses. He refuted the Arians so well, both orally and by his written books, that they were no longer able to defend their heresy. The heretics, filled with rage and fury, resolved to remove him out of the way. But God protected him, so that the heretics were never able to put into practice that which they had so firmly resolved to do. After the death of his brother, St. Leander, who was Bishop of Seville, St. Isidore was elected as his successor, by the King Recared, as well as by the clergy. St. Isidore, not less humble than learned, sought by every means possible, even by tears, to escape from this dignity. But the King and the clergy would not desist from their choice, and Isidore was compelled to accept of the bishopric. His first care was to have recourse to God in long and fervent prayers, and to beg for His powerful protection. He then went to work and spared neither pains nor labor to repair the ruined morals, to strengthen the Catholics, and to convert the heretics. He showed himself generous to the poor, solicitous for the forsaken, severe against the wicked, watchful over his subjects, and active in preaching and admonishing. His sermons were particularly directed towards making the people prize the Faith most highly and avoid sin; as he held it for a certain sign of future damnation when any one did not respect religion much, or permitted himself to fall into sin without concern, and postponed doing penance for a long time. He observed the Church ceremonies, customs and regulations most exactly, and insisted on their being observed by others. He wrote directions for the

clergy, that their conduct might serve as an edifying example for the imitation of the laity. He erected many schools, that the young might be instructed in virtue and science, for the welfare of the land. He had appointed hours in which he himself, gave instructions in the divine mysteries, so that the bishopric was filled with learned and holy men in a few years. In order that his teachings might be preserved after his death, he wrote several books in defence of Catholic truths, and for the refutation of heretical teachings. Pope Leo IV. prized these works so highly that he ordered them to be held in equal estimation with the writings of St. Augustine and St. Jerome. He entertained the highest respect for the Pope as the visible head of the Church, and insisted on the same from his subjects. He was accustomed to say that the low appreciation or utter disregard of Church ceremonies and regulations, of priests, bishops, and particularly of the Roman pontiff, even should their lives not be in accordance with their dignity, was a sure sign of heresy, or the straight way leading thereto; and, if there still remained an outward profession of Catholicity, the interior faith was nearly gone from the heart of those who were guilty of such deeds. Therefore, he endeavored earnestly to prevent this disrespect. In a word, this holy bishop was so solicitous for the welfare of his subjects, that he left nothing undone which might serve for their benefit. He continued his apostolic labors in this manner for forty years, without ever becoming less zealous. Six months before his death, feeling that his end was approaching, he redoubled his fervor in prayer, fasting and other good works. He had all his possessions distributed among the poor, to whom he had ever shown himself a loving father. After this, he had himself carried to the church, dressed in a penitential garb, received the holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, gave those present many wholesome admonitions, and begged pardon for his past faults. He then foretold, in the spirit of prophecy, the many calamities which would befall the country if the people did not live in keeping with his admonitions. These misfortunes actually followed in the course of time. He ended his holy life in the year 636, on the 4th day of April, and was buried according to his wish, at Seville. As this city was afterwards taken by the Moors, Ferdinand I., King of Castile, bought the relics from the barbarians, and had them removed to a magnificent church in Leon, where they are now preserved in a golden shrine. While engaged in war with the barbarians, the Spaniards frequently had occasion to feel the power of their holy teacher's intercession. St. Isidore is, therefore, highly revered by the people of Spain.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Isidore insisted on the observance of the church ceremonies, customs, regulations and uses. The low appreciation or utter disregard of the same, as well as of the clergy, bishops and pope, he considered as a sign of heresy, or at least, the straight way leading to it; and in this he judged correctly, as experience well proves. No true Catholic, lay or clerical, has ever set aside any of these ceremonies, spoken in an abusive manner of priests, bishops, etc., or evinced disrespect towards them. Heretics and apostates have always done this. When you see that one who pretends to be a Catholic agrees with them in this, rest assured faith is dead or dying. For he who lightly disregards a ceremony or regulation of the Church, will easily reject the Church also. Whoever disregards the clergy, bishops and pope, will most likely, disrespect their teachings also. And he who rejects any of the teachings of the true Church, is surely not far removed from heresy, though he may outwardly acknowledge himself a Catholic. Woe to these apparent Catholics, who are such only in name. They do more harm by their scandalous discourse against the clergy, bishops and pope, in the presence of heretics or poorly instructed Catholics, than the heretics themselves. This fact is in accordance with the words of St. Bernard: "A perverted, godless Catholic, does more harm than a hardened heretic; his responsibilities are very great, while his punishment is terrible." This will not be removed from him, for it is written: "The punishment of the scoffer is

already prepared." Never listen to these godless, heretical persons; do not willingly become acquainted with them, much less attend to their teachings or engage in conversation with them. Think of the words of the Most High: "Touch not my anointed."

II. Though, in the time of St. Isidore, the clergy did not all live as they should, yet he would not suffer them to be disrespected or undervalued, and in this he was right. Those who speak disrespectfully of priests or bishops are usually accustomed to apply what they say to all the clergy in general. But, to say nothing of the calumnies published against them, to say nothing of the small faults of the clergy, which are usually exaggerated, the number to whom crime can be truthfully attributed, considering their large body, is comparatively small, especially, if viewed in connection with the number of vicious persons filling responsible stations among the laity. As it would be unreasonable to speak unfavorably of all officers and rulers because some of them are wicked, so much the more is it unreasonable to speak against the clergy, because a far smaller number of priests may be vicious. Would not he be unreasonable, who would disrespect the apostles themselves, because a Judas was found among them? Now, if we were to divide the clergy into parties of twelve, according to the number of the apostles, I am sure that among every twelve we should not find one equalling Judas in depravity. And though a few of the vast number of the clergy do not live according to the high standard

of their profession, they still deserve our respect for the powers they hold and the dignity to which they are elevated. We must revere their sacred character; for Christ has said: "The Scribes and Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses. All things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do: but according to their works do ye not." In conclusion, hear what St. Chrys-

ostom says: "Do you know what a priest is? He is an angel, a minister of God. Whoever disregards him, disregards God, who created him. If he change the doctrine of the church, follow him not, though he be an angel; if he teach the truth, regard not his life, but his words. Let us do no harm to our instructors, lest we ourselves suffer injury."

FIFTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. VINCENT FERRER.

St. Vincent Ferrer, a true apostle of his time, was born in the year 1357 at the royal capital of Valentia in Spain. While still confined to the womb, his mother thought she heard a barking, which the Archbishop interpreted as a happy augury that the child would become a zealous preacher, and would, after the example of St. Dominic, protect the Church and confound the heretics through the strength of his eloquence. Even in his childhood, Vincent used to preach to other children with such zeal, that grown persons were astonished. He entered the Order of St. Dominic, in his 18th year, and after receiving the religious habit, he read the life of his holy founder very attentively, and endeavored, as much as possible, to follow his example and to attain religious perfection. Satan appeared to him in the form of a hermit, and tried to prevent him from doing this, by telling him that one must taste and enjoy the pleasures of the world, and not be so strict with one's self, or nature would soon be outdone; old age was the time for penance, and, until then, he should enjoy himself as his companions did. Vincent, well knowing the design of the pretended hermit, drove him away and continued in his fervor. At another time, the infernal spirit appeared to him in the form of a negro, and represented perseverance as something impossible. Vincent would not suffer himself to be disturbed, but calmly replied: "Begone, Satan; He who gave me grace to begin, will also give me grace to persevere." After his year of probation, Vincent applied himself to study, which he did with such zeal, that, in the course of a few years, he gave public instructions in profane and spiritual science with great credit. He attributed his

success more to the power of prayer than to his own application. He often advised students not only to pray before and after study but to call on God for help while engaged in studying. While thus occupied in giving instructions in school, he was called to the office of preaching, which he discharged with such zeal that, in fifteen years, he could not count more than fifteen days on which he did not preach. The important truths of our holy Faith, the four last things, and the bitter passion and death of Jesus Christ, were the subjects of his sermons. He represented these things with such force, that his hearers often burst into tears. The holy preacher was often obliged to stop in the middle of his sermons on account of the cries and lamentations of the people. The most obstinate unbelievers and the most hardened sinners were moved by his words. Hence it does not seem incredible when the author of his life tells us that he converted in Spain 20,000 Jews and 18,000 Moors to the true faith, and even a greater number of sinners to penance. God called him particularly to the office of preaching, and bestowed on him the apostolic gifts of prophecy and miracles. The Spirit of God spoke through him, and no one could resist it. His miracles cannot be numbered. The office of the Church proves that the holy man often restored health to the sick by the imposition of his hands; drove the evil spirit from the possessed, gave speech to the dumb, sight to the blind, cleansed the lepers, and raised the dead to life. A very striking occurrence is found in his life, and though it may appear impossible according to human views, it is nevertheless well authenticated. Not far from the city of Valentia, an insane woman, in the absence of her husband, had seized her only child, and cut it into several pieces, some of which she threw into a pot in order to boil and prepare them for table. The man had invited St. Vincent to visit him on that day; but when, on his return, he saw the horrible spectacle, he was at first stunned with terror, then raised such outcries as drew the whole neighborhood to the place. St. Vincent arrived just at this critical time. He consoled the father and ordered the mangled parts of the body to be brought to him. He then arranged them in order, and said: "Jesus, the Son of Mary, who, as true God, created the soul of this child out of nothing, will unite it again with this body, for His own greater honor and the glory of His holy name." After this he made the Sign of the Cross over the pieces of the body, and lo! the child was again alive. Those present looked at one another in amazement without speaking. After they were somewhat calmed, they praised God with loud voices, and published far and near the unheard-of miracle, to the great renown of the Saint. A miracle performed while preach-

ing obtained for him no less celebrity. The holy man was accustomed to preach in Spanish, and, though his listeners spoke divers tongues, they were, nevertheless, able to understand him; a miracle wrought by few since the time of the Apostles. To the gift of miracles with which he was favored, he united particular sanctity of life. He was so firmly grounded in humility, which is termed the foundation of virtues, that he refused all episcopal dignities, whether offered by popes or worldly monarchs, under the pretence that he was not worthy to accept them. He considered it a greater honor to convert one sinner, than to possess all the dignities of the world. The many miracles, on account of which he was so celebrated, were never occasions of vain glory to him, but rather served to humble him before God. We seldom find a Saint so revered by the clergy and the laity, the exalted and the humble. When he approached a city where he intended to give a mission, the clergy, arrayed in their sacred vestments, the bishop, and sometimes even royal personages, came to meet him and accompanied him to the church. Crowds of people fell before him, begged for his blessing, kissed his hands and clothes, and did every thing that could be done to honor a Saint on earth. At first, he tried to prevent this, but seeing that he could accomplish nothing thereby, he only took occasion to humble himself before God and lower himself beneath all men, without being puffed up by vain glory. His austerity was not less wonderful than his humility; he fasted daily for forty years, Sundays excepted; his bed was a bundle of straw, and he scourged himself every night unto blood. Scarcely two or three hours of the night were given to sleep, the rest were spent in prayer; and even in sickness he did not lessen this severity. He celebrated Mass early every morning, but scarcely ever without weeping. He read the Office before and after Mass; and spent the rest of the day in apostolic labors, such as preaching, hearing confessions, visiting the sick, and prisoners, establishing peace between the low and exalted; in a word, exercising an untiring zeal for souls. His sermons were composed at the foot of the cross, and though he read from the books of the holy Fathers as much as circumstances would permit, still the greater part of his preparation was in prayer. He prayed with great devotion, and as frequently and as long as he could; he admonished others to make use of the same means with great zeal, as necessary for becoming holy. He entertained the sincerest devotion towards the Crucified Saviour, with whom he took refuge in all trying circumstances. He evinced a childlike devotion towards the Blessed Virgin at all times. In every difficulty he called on her with great confidence, and advised others to do the same. His angelic purity,

which he carried undefiled to the grave, he prized most highly; because this virtue is particularly agreeable to our Lord and His holy mother. He had to sustain many hard combats on this account, but he always conquered completely. A noble lady of Valentia once pretended to be sick, and requested St. Vincent to visit her and hear her confession. Instead of making her confession, she tempted him to wicked actions; but the chaste servant of God opposed her impiety, gave her several severe rebukes, and, not being able to effect anything, fled away. The woman was filled with rage, and said that St. Vincent had deprived her of chastity. The Saint was more afflicted at so base a calumny than at anything else; nevertheless, he recommended his chastity to God, and kept silence. God befriended His chaste servant, and permitted the wicked woman to be possessed by the devil and cruelly tormented. When several priests tried to drive the devil out, he replied that he would only depart for the one who remained unburnt in the midst of fire. At first no one knew who this might be, but as soon as St. Vincent entered the room, the evil spirit cried out: "This is the one who has remained unburnt, in the midst of fire," and departed immediately. The woman acknowledged her guilt, and the innocence of the Saint. He was often obliged to suffer such persecutions and calumnies. The Saint bore all with generous patience, always meeting his persecutors with great meekness. He not only forgave them from his heart, but prayed for them and tried to perform acts of kindness for them whenever he could. These and other examples of virtue, as they had obtained for him the reputation of a great Saint, were the means of giving particular force to his sermons. He commenced preaching in Spain, and hence obtained the name of Apostle of Spain. Thence he was called to France, and later to Germany, Italy, and other countries. He remained everywhere constant in his austere manner of living. At last he reached Little Brittany, where he preached with his usual zeal. The holy man became so weak, partly through continual austerity, and partly from his many painful journeys, that he was taken dangerously ill. Although his entire life had been a preparation for death, nevertheless, he did all he considered necessary or useful towards obtaining a happy end. After receiving the sacraments, he desired to spend his last hours with God. He had the Passion of Christ and the Penitential Psalms read to him, and, while the Litany of the Saints was being said, he raised his hands and eyes towards heaven and peacefully slept in the Lord, in the year of Christ 1419, on Wednesday before Palm Sunday, in the seventieth year of his age. Did we wish to relate the miracles that happened after his death, we might fill a whole volume with them.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Vincent drove Satan away when he appeared to him in the form of a hermit and told him to enjoy himself while young, and to defer penance and works of piety to old age. There are many who imagine that youth must be boisterous, that, during those years, one may live according to his will and be remiss, and that, in later years, or after having entered another station, it will be time enough to commence a life of piety. Such teachings are really the inspirations of Satan. You act foolishly, O mortal! when you are thus persuaded. Tell me, first, will you ever reach the period of manhood or old age? Will you not die in your youth, as thousands have done? What will be your condition in eternity, if you have not thought of God, but deferred doing so to a future day, according to the advice of Satan? But suppose you do reach the time you have destined for a life of penance, do you believe that you can do so after having lived so impiously during your youth? The Scripture assures us that when a man grows old he will not depart from the way in which he walked while young. What a rare wonder when the contrary happens! Again, suppose you are sure of living piously in your old age, is it proper to give to the world the first and best part of your life and to reserve the last and worst for God and His service? Is not this an imitation of Cain, who reserved the best for himself, and gave the worst to God? Take care lest his fate overtake you. The same God, who in the old Testament commanded the first fruits to be offered to Him, desires also the first years of your life as the best offering you can give

Him. He desires you to serve Him from your youth. Therefore, do not listen to Satan; but follow the counsel of the wise man: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." But if you have passed your youth in vice, then repent of it from your heart, and perform true penance, thus seeking to repair the evil you have done.

II. St. Vincent spent many hours of the day, as well as of the night, in prayer, and advised others to practise the same as a most necessary means of salvation. It is certain that prayer is most necessary for sinners, as well as for the just; for the former, that they may obtain grace to perform true penance; and for the latter, that they may persevere in piety. If you do not love prayer or do not practise it frequently, then you do not love your salvation. Many imagine it sufficient for them to recommend themselves to the prayers of the clergy or pious persons. They engage others to pray for them, yes, even to confess and communicate for them. If they are declared partakers of the merits of a religious order, they imagine the prayers of the religious will be sufficient for them, although they do not pray or do much good themselves. What a deceit of Satan! It is indeed very praiseworthy to recommend one's self to the prayers of others; but if the whole world would pray for you, and all religious orders would declare you a partaker of their good works, it would not lead you to salvation, unless you pray yourself and try to lead a Christian life. Even the prayers of the saints will not help you, unless you pray yourself. What I have said should not serve to make you disre-

gard the prayers of others, much less those of the saints; it should only serve to make you pray more fervently, and not hinder the effect of their prayers for you.

Let us recommend ourselves to the prayers of others, but not trust to them entirely. Let us pray our-

selves and so regulate our lives that the prayers which are offered for us may be efficacious. "If we give ourselves to a life of prayer and virtue, then will the prayers of others in our behalf obtain their effect," says St. Chrysostom.

SIXTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. WILLIAM ABBOT IN DENMARK.

St. William was born at Paris, of noble parents, and in his tenderest years was entrusted to his uncle Hugh, abbot of St. Germain, to be instructed in virtue and science. Under so great a master he made great progress, and became the model of all his companions. At the age of maturity, he became one of the canons of the church which bears the names of St. Peter, Paul and of St. Genevieve. The lives of the canons were not as they should have been. William soon noticed that his companions did not lead a very regular life, but he did not follow their example, and remained firm in the manner of living he had learned, in spite of mockery and bad example. While others were engaged in their diversions, William employed his time in prayer, spiritual reading and other pious exercises. This, however, displeased the canons; they evinced the greatest ill-will towards him, and tried, by every means, to remove him from their society. The Saint bore their ill-will with the greatest patience, and never entertained any resentment against them. Some years later, he was called to a priory out of the city, to which he went with great joy, as it afforded him an opportunity of leading a retired and holy life. During this time it happened that the canons were deposed, and the Religious of Saint Augustine were chosen in their place. Oddo, the presiding abbot, wrote to William, and, in the most friendly manner, invited him to return to the society, hoping that the new canons would be induced to aspire after perfection by the example of the holy man. William consulted his superior, who advised him to join the Order of St. Augustine, that he might be more removed from all dangers. Although William sought nothing but his own salvation by his retired life, still he could not immediately consent to renounce his rich priory and enter the religious state. The superior,

noticing this, showed William an image of the crucified Saviour, and said: "Is not that God, who forsook heaven for you, worthy that you should renounce your earthly possessions for love of Him?" More was not needed to win the heart of William. He fell with shame to the ground and declared himself willing to do all that was required of him. He generously forsook his earthly possessions, joined the Order of St. Augustine and never abated in the fervor with which he entered the community. He observed the least of the rules most faithfully, and edified all by his pious example, until the sixtieth year of his life. Once, during this time, Christ appeared to him in sleep and said: "William, thou must go into an unknown and distant land. Thou wilt have to endure many persecutions, but do not falter. I will be with thee and will call thee to bliss in thy old age." William, encouraged by the promise of eternal bliss, offered himself to God, to suffer all the pains and labors, as well as all the persecutions and contradictions that might befall him. He did not know, however, what land was meant, until the bishop of Roschild, who had known him at Paris, entreated him to go to Denmark, there to reëstablish regular discipline in a monastery of the regular canons of St. Augustine, which had nearly fallen into disorder. He travelled thither in accordance with the command of his superior, accompanied by three of his religious brethren. As he was most welcome to the holy Bishop, so he was most unwelcome to the religious living in the monastery. They caused him a thousand vexations, persecuted him continually, and carried their malice so far as to resolve to sell him to the Barbarians, or deprive him of life. They had no other pretence than that he insisted on the observance of the rules and tried to abolish abuses. The holy abbot would not permit himself to be deterred from his endeavors, either by threats or the danger of death. He treated his persecutors with the greatest meekness and patience, until they at last acknowledged their faults, and returned to a better life. He had the additional joy of building a new monastery, which was soon filled with zealous religious. Much of this success was owing to the fact that those who had at first persecuted the Saint, had finally yielded to him when they saw that God visibly protected him against all opposition, and confirmed his teaching by the gift of many miracles in favor of the sick. Hence it followed, that as great as was the disrespect of the perverse against William, so great afterwards was their regard for the servant of God. Seven years before his death a venerable old man appeared to him and said; "Seven more shalt thou live." William, who was then ninety-one years old, believed he would die in seven days, and so prepared with all diligence for a

happy end. As he felt fresh and well at the end of seven days, although so old, he applied those words to seven weeks, as we shall read elsewhere of the emperor Henry, but with an unhappy issue. He next applied the prophecy to seven months, and finally to seven years, which was the true meaning of the words. The holy man spent these seven years in continual acts of virtue and penance, and, before his end, God visited him with a very severe illness. His entire body, from head to foot, was covered with ulcers, so that none could behold him without shuddering. William evinced in this, as in all persecutions, an unconquerable patience. As he resembled holy Job in his body, so he also repeated his words: "If we have received good things at the hand of the Lord, why should we not receive evil? As it has pleased the Lord, so be it done; blessed be the name of the Lord." On holy Thursday he celebrated Mass, gave his subjects holy Communion and his last admonitions. When about to wash their feet, according to his custom, he was seized with so violent a pain in his side, that he was obliged to desist. On Easter Sunday he received the Sacrament once more, and desired, after the example of St. Martin, to be laid on the skin of a wild beast, covered with ashes. As soon as this was done, he resigned his spirit into the hands of his Creator. A religious, who was far away at the time, saw his soul taken up into unspeakable glory. Twelve years after his death, another religious saw a glorious dwelling in heaven, which had been prepared for this Saint.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. William had to live among wicked people for some time; he did not permit himself, however, to be drawn from the course of virtue either by their bad example or their mockery. Thus he proved his firmness in virtue and his fidelity to God. In his severe illness, as well as in persecutions, he ever showed an heroic patience. Imitate him in both. Do not permit yourself to be drawn from virtue, either by the bad example or by the mockery of others. Live as the commandments of God require, not as they live who depart from them. Regard not their ridicule or mockery, it can bring you no

shame. Remain true to God. In sickness and sorrow try to acquire Christian patience; make use of the words of holy Job as St. William did: "If we have received good things at the hand of the Lord, why should we not receive evil? As it has pleased the Lord, so be it done, blessed be the name of the Lord."

In these words, mark a very important truth which may encourage you in suffering: not only good, but also what we term evil, as poverty, sickness, privation of earthly goods, comes from God. "Good and evil, life and death, poverty and riches come from God," says

the wise man. One thing however, should be well marked: the evil which befalls you without any sin comes particularly from God. He sends it to you and orders it for your good. When sin is connected with evil, as in the case of persecution, robbery or fraud, God does not will the sin, but permits it and wishes you to suffer with resignation. In such circumstances never regard the person through whose wickedness you have been offended, oppressed or persecuted, but turn your mind to Him, with whose permission the evil has happened. Thus did holy Job, as is clearly proved from his own words: thus, too, did St. William and even Jesus Christ, who called His bitter passion and death, a chalice which His father had sent him: "Dost thou not wish Me to drink the chalice which My father has given Me?"

II. St. William prepared himself for death for seven years, by acts of virtue and penance. He always kept death before his eyes and thus encouraged himself to good. "Blessed is he," says Thomas à Kempis, "who has the hour of his death continually before his eyes, and daily prepares himself for death." Death can seize you at all times and places; for there is no time or place at which you cannot die. What should you do? St. Bernard says, "Death watches continually for you, so should you watch for it." If you wish to be prudent, watch continually for death; that is, you should be prepared to die in all places and at all

times. Should death seize you at a time and at a place when you are unprepared, woe to you! To die unprepared is to die a very unhappy death. Think often of death then, while you are still alive, and prepare yourself in time. Do now in life what in death you will wish you had done. Avoid now what you will then wish you had avoided. Purify your conscience from sin, keep it clean, and be zealous in the performance of good works. This must you endeavor to do, if you wish to die happily. "Therefore be ever prepared," says Thomas à Kempis "that death may not overtake you unprepared." Reflect also on the question which the abbot Oddo put to St. William: "Is not that God, who for your sake forsook heaven, worthy that you, through love of Him should forsake your earthly possessions?" But put the question to yourself in a different manner; for example: "Is not that God, who suffered and died for me worthy that I should earnestly avoid sin? Is He not deserving that I should leave off this or that bad habit, forsake this sinful friendship? Is he not deserving that I should be zealous in the performance of good works, through love of Him? Does He not merit that I should be generous towards the poor? I am sure that if you reflect on these things with attention, you will be induced to do all that should be done for God; and encouraged to avoid all that could displease Him; for, your God merits all this and even more from you.

SEVENTH DAY OF APRIL.

BLESSED HERMANN JOSEPH, CONFESSOR.

Cologne, the most renowned city on the Rhine, is the happy birth-place of the Blessed Hermann Joseph. His father, at first a wealthy burgher, was afterwards reduced to great poverty. Regardless of this, he neglected nothing which might serve for the education of his little son. Hermann had a frank, open disposition, which was inclined to good. When he went to school, he avoided all those who were loose in manners and speech. While others enjoyed themselves, he betook himself to the Church, before the picture of the Mother of God, for whom he evinced, even in his sixth year, a tender devotion and great confidence. He spoke to her as a child to its mother, and once he brought a beautiful apple to the Mother of God, and with a childish simplicity besought her to accept it. Hereupon the picture stretched out its hand and took the apple with every sign of pleasure. Henceforth the Blessed Virgin showed herself a tender mother towards Hermann; she spoke familiarly with him, as a mother with her child. Once on a winter night, while praying before her picture, he was shivering with cold. Mary showed him a stone under which she told him he would find money to buy a pair of shoes. She added, that every time he needed money to buy paper, books or clothing, he would find it there. Hermann obeyed blindly and always found as much money as he needed. This miracle could not long remain unknown; his companions discovered it, and went to the stone in search of money; but in vain; this was a favor reserved for Hermann alone. When he was twelve years old, he went to the monastery of the Premonstratensians at Stienfeld; served the religious there for a time, and was, at length, admitted among their number. After having successfully completed his studies, he was entrusted with the care of the refectory and other duties, which did not allow him much time for prayer. He was at first very much perplexed at this; but the Mother of God appeared to him and said: "Hermann, thou shouldst know that thou canst do nothing more agreeable to my Son and me, than to perform properly the work imposed on thee by obedience, and to serve thy brethren through love." Comforted and consoled, Hermann performed all his work after this with great joy. In the office of sacristan, which was afterwards imposed on him, he had more time for prayer, which he well employed.

The friendly conversations of Mary with Joseph increased with this opportunity. We seldom find a Saint towards whom Mary showed herself more gracious in conferring heavenly graces and to whom she appeared more frequently; and, on the other hand, we seldom meet one who showed more devotion towards the Mother of God, than the blessed Hermann. The very sight of a picture of Mary often entranced him, so fervent was his love. Whenever he could conceive a practice in her honor, he put it into execution immediately. His religious brethren gave him no other name than Joseph, on account of his great love to Mary. At first, he tried to oppose this, because he did not consider himself worthy of this holy name. Mary commanded him to retain it, however, and this was a new inducement to love her.

Unfortunately, after a time our zealous Joseph grew somewhat cooler in his devotion towards Mary and neglected some of the exercises he had performed in her honor. This was owing to his anxiety, lest the church of his monastery might be plundered, as was the case with many others at the time. The Mother of God appeared to him not in her usual splendor, but old and disfigured. Joseph was much distressed at this, but Mary said to him: "I appear to thee as I am in thy heart. Thy devotion towards me has abated. Thou hast neglected thy former exercises in my honor, because thou art anxious about thy church treasures. Can I not do more by my protection than thou with thy care?" When Joseph heard this, he was very much ashamed, humbly begged pardon, and not only resumed, but increased his former exercises of devotion. His devotion towards the Holy Eucharist was also very great. He visited it as often as possible by day and by night. He seldom celebrated the Holy Sacrifice without shedding many tears, and was often entranced by the ardor of his love, so that he remained in ecstasy at the altar for a long while. Jesus Christ often condescended to appear to him visibly; but the Saint was never in the least elated on account of these and other graces. On the contrary, he was ever humble, and could not endure the least word of praise, while insults were subjects of rejoicing to him. His austerity in eating, drinking, and sleeping was as severe as might be expected from the greatest sinner, although he had never lost his innocence by committing a mortal sin. He used to say that this life is a time of penance. God permitted the Blessed Joseph to be tormented by great temptations, as well as by severe illness. In all these trials he showed himself firm, undisturbed, and entirely resigned to the will of God. At last, it pleased God to call this servant, who had been so faithful to Him and His holy Mother, to eternal

bliss. The nuns of a convent, not far from Stienfeld desired to have the Blessed Joseph as their spiritual director during the holy season of Lent. At first, the clergy and prelates opposed this, and, though Joseph would fain have humbly sided with them, he said: "This is the will of God." Hereupon the prelates gave him permission to go to the nuns. When he arrived there, he pointed to a spot of ground with his staff, and said: "Here shall you bury me." None thought his death would take place so soon, but the result proves that the holy man knew beforehand the time and place of his death. When he had continued his instructions to the third day of Lent, he was taken suddenly ill, and remained so until the Thursday after Easter. After receiving the last sacraments, he was comforted with a vision, and resigned his soul into the hands of his Creator, in the year 1230. The nuns, considering themselves happy in the possession of the remains of so great a servant of God, buried him in the place he had designated on his arrival. His religious brethren, however, desired the body for their own monastery. The nuns refused to resign it, in consequence of which, the religious complained to the Bishop of Cologne, who gave orders that the body should be disinterred. This was done on the third day after Pentecost, and the body was found to be entirely incorrupt, and free from all offensive odor, which was contrary to all expectations, as the ground was very damp. The remains were conveyed to Stienfeld and consigned to the earth with every token of honor. Sick persons recovered their health at the grave of the servant of God, and even the dead were restored to life.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The blessed Hermann was very much concerned because he could not pray as much as he desired, on account of the duties imposed on him by obedience. The Mother of God informed him that he could do nothing more agreeable to her divine Son and herself than to perform properly the duties of his station; a consoling lesson for pious servants and laborers, who have much work to do. Many such persons, besides saying their morning and evening prayers, would like to say other prayers during the day, and, in addition to hearing one mass,

would like to hear several. They need not grieve, however, but rest assured that, by performing their work properly, they merit more, than if they had spent many hours in prayer. They should always say a devout morning prayer, accustom themselves to make a good intention and at least say; "Lord, for love of Thee, and to serve Thee, I will do this work." If their task is long and difficult, they should, from time to time, raise their mind to God, renew their good intention, repeat the above ejaculation, and thus encourage themselves anew. When

their work is completed, it should be offered to God. Thus their work becomes a prayer; for St. Peter Damian says: "Doing what is required of one, working according to one's station, what is this but praying?" Nearly every one has time to say a devout night prayer and to examine his conscience in the evening. Thus we should work and pray.

II. The tenderest devotion and most childlike confidence in the Mother of God was something particular in the character of the Blessed Hermann. Hence he received unusual marks of favor from her. Imitate him in this; let no day pass without evincing your devotion to Mary. Awaken in your self a deep veneration for her. She is in truth your mother; and, as the only Son of God chose the Blessed Virgin for His mother and became man in her virginal womb, so is He our brother, while Mary is our mother, as I have lately proved to you.

Remember also what took place at the foot of the Cross. The words of Christ to St. John, "Behold thy mother," may be applied to all christians. St. Bernard says of St. John: "This disciple represented all christians; for, just as Christ said to him: "Behold thy mother," so he gave Mary to all christians as a mother." Invoke and honor her, therefore, with the love of a child. Make use of the words of the Church: "Show thyself a mother;" but remember, Mary also says to you: "Show thyself a true, obedient and respectful child." "Endeavor," writes St. Bonaventure, "as a pious child, to imitate Mary in all things, as she is your mother; and she will surely ever prove a mother to you; she will help you as her child, she will obtain for you all you desire, and finally, lead you happily to eternal bliss." She loves us, according to the words of this Saint, more than a natural mother.

EIGHTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. ALBERT, PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM.

St. Albert, one of the most renowned patriarchs of Jerusalem, was born of noble parents, at Parma, in Italy. The result of the great care his parents took of his education, was that he not only acquired great proficiency in the liberal arts and in science, but also made great progress in virtue and the fear of God. In order to preserve his innocence more securely, he entered, very young, a monastery of the regular canons of St. Augustine, at Mortara. His life here was so virtuous, that he was chosen prior. After he had been here some years, he was elected by the people and clergy of Vercelli to become their bishop. He opposed this at first, but was finally obliged to yield to the command of Pope Lucian III., and accept the bishopric. He maintained this

position for nearly twenty years, to the great advantage of souls and the entire satisfaction of his community. He was austere with himself, compassionate and merciful towards his subjects, untiring in preaching and other episcopal duties, unceasing in prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Prayer was his first occupation in the morning, and he never omitted it on any account, being convinced that his other duties would succeed better, when he had obtained God's blessing for them in prayer. In defending the rights of his bishopric, he showed himself firm and unyielding. He loved and desired the decoration of the churches. He renewed many of them and endowed them with rich revenues, that God might be served everywhere by His faithful servants. He had the particular gift of making peace between persons at variance with one another. Therefore, the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, requested him to become mediator between the Papal See and himself. The rulers of the renowned cities of Parma and Piacenza did the same, as they had entertained a standing hatred towards each other, to the great shame of the inhabitants. He also had much power over the evil spirit, whom he drove out of many who were possessed. Among these, was a princess of Parma, who was tormented by five infernal spirits. She went to the holy bishop, who took her to the grave of St. Eusebius, former bishop of Vercelli, and there performed the exorcisms of the Church, and the much tormented princess was relieved. The renown of the Saint reached even as far as Syria. The patriarch of Jerusalem having lately died, the assembled council of the clergy took advantage of the occasion to elect St. Albert as his successor. Innocent III, the Roman pontiff, not only approved of this choice, but wrote to St. Albert and advised him to accept the proffered spiritual burden, in consideration of the disturbed state of affairs in the Holy Land, which called for a man who would defend Christianity with heroic bravery against the assaults of the Saracens, whose only aim and desire was to overthrow it. The Pope wrote as follows: "Jesus Christ, who died and suffered so much in this land, deserves to have a true servant, who will shun neither persecution nor death for His sake." St. Albert, encouraged by what the Pope had written, but still more by the example of Christ, settled the affairs of the diocese which he had thus far governed, and repaired to Rome, where he was received in a most friendly manner by the Pope and endowed with many extraordinary privileges. From Rome he went to Genoa, thence to Syria. The city of Jerusalem was at the time under the dominion of the Saracens. Therefore; the new patriarch was obliged to take up his abode at Ptolomais. His first care was to protest against the oppression of the Christians,

and his next was to consult God in long and fervent prayer on the means for obtaining redress. God enlightened him in a wonderful manner, and so blessed his labors that a great number of persons who had fallen from the faith were converted, the wavering were strengthened, and virtue was acquired where crime had previously crept in. His daily preaching, which he did with apostolic zeal, contributed much towards this. He emphatically warned his subjects to avoid sin; but when they had fallen, through weakness or malice, he advised them to do penance, as he considered nothing more dangerous than the postponement of penance from one feast to another, or until death. These repeated admonitions effected very much, though even more was done by the sanctity of his life, which was so great that even the Saracens, the sworn enemies of Christianity, venerated him highly, and he succeeded in obtaining many favors for the Christians from them.

His apostolic labors in the Holy Land continued for eight years, during which time he never departed from his holy manner of living, or lessened his zeal for the good of his subjects. God permitted that he should seal the same with his blood. Although he had always evinced charity, meekness and modesty in giving admonitions, still he used severity where it was needed. He had warned a certain man of Calunio, in a most paternal manner, to amend his life; and as the man became more wicked with the lapse of time, he threatened him with excommunication. The embittered wretch now sought revenge. Whilst the Bishop and clergy were advancing towards the Church, to celebrate divine service, on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, the enraged murderer stabbed the holy patriarch, who fell to the ground and soon after expired, in the year 1214. The sorrow which the unexpected death of the patriarch occasioned the Christians throughout the Holy Land cannot be expressed. One thought alone brought them consolation: that he, whom they had venerated on earth as a kind father, would surely be a mighty and faithful mediator for them in heaven; and in this they were not mistaken; for they obtained many spiritual and corporal benefits by invoking his assistance.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Prayer was the first occupation of St. Albert early in the morning, and he was confident of the divine blessing on all his works when he had recommended them to God in prayer. Whoever you are, my reader,

I pray you follow St. Albert in this, as long as you live. On awaking, give your first thoughts to God. "When thou awakest," writes St. Bonaventure, "turn thy first thoughts to the Lord." Much depends on this.

The evil spirit strives to gain your first thoughts, and if he succeeds, he indulges the hope of being master of your heart throughout the day. Take care that you do not allow him this conquest; your first thoughts belong to God and not to Satan. While rising and dressing, repeat the little prayers you learned in early youth. When you are dressed, kneel before your oratory or a pious picture and say your morning prayer. Give earnest thanks to God for having permitted you to live until the present day, as He has herein given you a grace denied to thousands. St. Ambrose says that, before leaving our room in the morning, we should thank God for having preserved our life during the night. 2d. You should offer to God all the thoughts, words, actions and sufferings of the whole day, for His greater honor and glory. 3d. Make a firm resolution not to offend God by committing sin, especially such sins as you are in the habit of committing, but at the same time, implore the divine assistance, that you may be able to keep this resolution. Finally, invoke the blessing of God on all your undertakings and ask the Mother of God and your patron saints to aid you. When you have done all this, apply yourself to the work required by your station, and you will experience the truth of St. Albert's saying: that you will succeed in all things. Do not say: "I have no time, I have too many household duties and too much work to do," for, as you never refuse yourself the time to take your corporal nourishment, you should also nourish your soul by prayer. And if you have much work and many weighty household duties to perform, this only renders prayer more necessary, that God may give you the required strength to perform your work well. I do not desire

you to say long prayers, as the saints have done. A quarter of an hour is sufficient; but let your prayer be devout; and you will see that time given to God is not lost. Again, I would ask you: are you not daily exposed to many dangers of body and soul? Cannot an accident happen to your body? Can you not fall into dangerous occasions and great temptations? Who can protect you in such cases? Who can sustain and uphold you? God alone. But how can you reasonably hope that God will guard and preserve you, when you have not asked him to do so, and act as though you had no need of Him? Consider this well, and learn from it what you have to do. The wise man says to God: "We ought to prevent the sun to bless Thee; and to adore Thee at the dawning of the light." Yes, at the dawn of day one should call upon God in devout prayer.

II. St. Albert earnestly desired his subjects to perform penance after having sinned, and he considered it extremely dangerous to delay from day to day or perhaps until death. Certainly, it is very dangerous to defer penance; for, who assures the sinner that he will have his understanding in order to perform penance on his death-bed, or the will or power to do so? Who assures him that he will have the time or the grace? True it is, God sometimes gives the grace of true repentance to sinners in their old age and even on their death-bed. But will He grant you the like favor? You answer, perhaps he will; and why do you say, perhaps? Because this sometimes happens. Oh! reflect that it concerns your soul; and will you let the eternal salvation of your only, your immortal soul depend upon a perhaps? Oh! blindness, folly, and wickedness. Perhaps, God will not even give you

time and grace. But, you say, God has promised to receive the sinner in whatever hour he shall return to Him. This is true, and God will keep His word; but will you do penance in your old age or on your death-bed? Where has God promised you this? Answer, sincerely, and you will be forced to say "Never." "He who has promised forgiveness to the penitent, has not promised it to him who delays doing penance for the coming day

or the hour of death," says St. Gregory; and just as little has He promised this to those whom He has permitted to reach old age. Many aged persons have never done penance, even on their death-bed, but have died in their sins. What folly and presumption to postpone penance? Now perform penance and you can be sure of forgiveness. "If you would be assured of forgiveness for your sins in death, perform penance in life," says St. Bernard.

NINTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. CASSILDA, PRINCESS.

That God does not suffer the least good work to go unrewarded is proved in the short, though edifying life of St. Cassilda. She was, by birth, the daughter of Aldemon, a Moorish prince, who held his court at Toledo, and was a declared enemy of Christianity. She saw that her father had many of the Christians, whom he had taken prisoners, thrown into dark dungeons, and permitted them to die of hunger, or be treated in other cruel ways. Cassilda deplored their misery, and was moved with deep compassion when she heard the howls and shrieks of those who were dying from hunger. It was useless to try to withdraw her father from this cruel course; for he even took pleasure in listening to the cries of the captives. Therefore, Cassilda endeavored to relieve them herself, as much as possible. She collected food and took it secretly to the prison in order to give the needy some relief. This having been done several times, she was noticed by some persons who informed her father of it. The tyrant foamed with rage, and would have taken instant revenge on his only daughter, had not the report been called incredible by certain persons, who advised the king to convince himself with his own eyes, and watch his daughter secretly at the hour when, according to information, she was wont to take food to the prison.

The king did so; he watched his daughter secretly, and saw her going to the prison, at the usual time, with provisions wrapped

in a cloth. The father being much enraged, fell upon her, and asked her what she was carrying? Cassilda replied: "Roses and other flowers." Thereupon the father tore open the cloth and saw, to his great astonishment, nothing but roses and flowers. God doubtless directed her to give this answer, and wrought this miracle to protect the good hearted Cassilda. The father was now pacified and believed the report false. Cassilda, transported out of herself at the goodness of God, gave her heartfelt thanks to Him and then proceeded to the prison. Arrived there, she opened the cloth, and, to her new amazement, found, not roses and other flowers, but the bread and meat she had collected. She related the fact to the prisoners, who were all very much rejoiced, and humbly thanked God for having thus protected their benefactress. From this circumstance, Cassilda took occasion more than ever to ascertain the truth of the religion professed by the Christians. She frequently went to them for instructions and at last resolved to embrace their faith, regardless of all dangers. While she was engaged with this thought, and was contemplating how and when she might safely receive Baptism, she was taken very ill, and her recovery was considered very doubtful. She had formerly heard a certain christian relate that at Brigorio, a city near Tarragona, there was a pond called St. Vincent's pond, where many sick persons recovered their health. Cassilda remembered this during her illness and was inwardly moved by the most ardent desire to go thither, not so much for the purpose of recovering her bodily health as to obtain a favorable opportunity of embracing the christian religion, through the holy waters of Baptism. As she could not do this, however, without the knowledge of her father, she informed him of her intentions on account of the healing properties of the bath and begged him, if he loved her, to take her to it. The king at first refused, but finally yielded to the repeated entreaties of his child, and arranged a becoming train of courtiers, consisting of many lords and servants, to accompany her, and sent her with a letter to the christian king, requesting him to see that his beloved daughter might have the full use of the healing properties of the bath. This monarch was no other than Ferdinand, the great catholic king, who received Cassilda in a most appropriate manner, and made due arrangements for the use of the bath. Cassilda used the bath with great confidence in the God of the christians, and was perfectly cured. After this she made known to the king her desire of receiving Baptism, which was administered to her with becoming pomp. Feeling entirely healed in body and soul, she began to consider within herself that she would have no opportunity of practising her faith upon her return to her

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father, but, on the contrary, would stand in great danger of losing it, especially as she would be forced to marry a heathen. She therefore sent her courtiers home, with the announcement that she desired nothing of all the paternal possessions, but wished to end her life where she had been cured. She had a small dwelling and chapel built for herself, and gave continual thanks to God for her wonderful call to the true religion, leading at the same time a quiet, retired and irreproachable life to the end.

The evil spirit, who could not endure so bright an example of virtue, left nothing undone to tempt the christian heroine, who, with such generosity had forsaken a royal fortune for the sake of the true faith. He represented to her, on one side, the honors and pleasures she might have enjoyed in her father's palace, and on the other, the loss of these honors, impending poverty, and utter abandonment by all mankind. He tried to disgust her with her solitude, to withdraw her from prayer, and finally induce her to forsake her new home and return to her father's palace. But this princess, so particularly enlightened by God, detected the artifice of Satan, and consequently gave it no hearing, and remained firm in her resolution of persevering in the virtuous course she had commenced. God richly rewarded her constancy in this life, by bestowing on her many extraordinary graces, and in the next, by giving her an eternal happiness, incomparably greater than that which she had forsaken on account of the true faith. He also glorified her tomb after her death, by restoring health to many who invoked her intercession in sickness.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Cassilda showed the sincerest compassion towards the afflicted, and hastened to their relief wherever it was possible. This seemingly trifling act opened for her the way to a knowledge of the true faith. Had she not shown this compassion, she would have remained in the idolatry in which she had been born and reared, and would thus have been eternally lost. The beginning of her salvation was the alms she gave to the poor. Learn again, therefore, what I have elsewhere said, that our salvation sometimes depends on a little thing. A small mustard seed grows to be a large

tree; and so an apparently unimportant good work will often lead to eternal salvation. How careful we should be, therefore, to neglect no opportunity of doing good! This should be particularly observed in regard to assisting our neighbor; for, our Lord Himself, pronounces those blessed, who show compassion towards the needy, and has pronounced a blessing on the merciful. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." The Psalmist says the same in the name of the Lord: "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and poor: the Lord will deliver him in

the evil day." Do what you can in this regard; assist your neighbor according to your ability.

II. Cassilda would not return to her father's palace after her conversion to the true faith, especially, because she feared the danger of a marriage with a heathen. Here she proved that she prized the faith more than all the treasures of the world. How much do you value the same? What care do you take that you may not lose it? Among other ways, persons are in danger of losing the true faith by intermarriage with non-Catholics, as I have shown you on the 16th of February. Such a marriage endangers not only the faith of the parties united, but that of the children who are the offspring of their union. Daily experience clearly proves this; for, either the unwarrantable and wicked contract is made that some of the children shall be raised as Catholics, the others not; or nothing is said about religion at all. If the first is done, half of the children are brought up as non-Catholics and are already as much as lost. If the latter, the non-Catholic will yet insist that at least one half of the children be reared in his error; consequently they will not attain to eternal salvation or

a knowledge of the true faith. Even should the non-Catholic party promise that all the children shall be Catholics, is the danger then at an end? By no means; for, regardless of all promises, he will leave nothing undone to win the children to his side. If the Catholic party die, then the faith of the children is neglected, and thus hundreds of Catholic children are brought up in error against their will, unless a higher authority interpose. Now tell me, can a Catholic enter into marriage with a non-Catholic without incurring great guilt? God cursed those parents who offered their children to the idol Moloch; a much heavier curse have those parents to expect, who place their children in danger of losing their faith and eternal salvation. Let every Catholic take care lest he call this curse upon himself, and, where it is possible, let him save others also from it. Let every one highly prize the true faith and never incur the danger of losing it. For, it always remains true, as St. Athanasius says: "He that desires to be saved must before all things have the true faith, and unless one preserve it whole and inviolate, he will be eternally lost."

TENTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. MACARIUS, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH.

St. Macarius, whose memory the Church celebrates to-day, was born of noble parents, in Armenia. He received his name from a bishop of Antioch who was sponsor for him in Baptism, and who was ever much concerned about his education. In early youth, he manifested a mature judgment and great capacity for retaining knowledge. As his application was not less ardent than his talent, he made the most wonderful advancement in a few

years. Great, also, was his progress in virtue, for which he was justly much more zealous than for knowledge. His great reserve and irreproachable life caused him to be loved by all classes of people, which was a great comfort to the bishop, who, not doubting that the learned and holy Macarius would become very useful to the church, ordained him priest. In this position he had an opportunity of exercising his zeal for the honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls, for which reason he was so esteemed by the clergy and laity, that they unanimously chose him as their bishop on the death of his instructor, their previous bishop. They had a hard contest, however, with his humility, until he finally yielded to their choice. As soon, however, as he had taken upon himself the episcopal functions, he showed a truly apostolic love and care for his subjects. His words and actions were directed towards winning all for Christ unto eternal salvation. He preached almost every day, visited the sick himself, and tried to correct bad customs, and to prevent the commission of crime. He daily wept over the slight faults he had committed in his youth, and daily performed penance for them as well as for the sins of others. His devotion was so great, that he scarcely ever prayed without shedding many tears; for which reason he always kept a cloth at hand to wipe his tears. A leper, who touched this cloth, was cured of his disease. The fame of this miracle having spread throughout the city, many sick persons came to him and desired him to obtain for them the restoration of their health. The veneration and love which the inhabitants of the city entertained for their bishop can easily be imagined. But this was insupportable to the humility of the holy man, who, therefore, resolved to resign his bishopric and serve God in solitude. He distributed his possessions among the poor, left the city quietly, accompanied by four of his priests, and went to the Holy Land to visit the sacred places as a penitent. During his sojourn there, he brought many of the Saracens to a knowledge of the true faith; but suffered many cruel persecutions on this account. He was taken captive by these barbarous unbelievers, suffered many insults and injuries, and was at last thrown into a dungeon. But as he did not cease to preach Christianity, some Saracens bound him with ropes, nailed him to the earth in the form of a cross, and placed a heavy stone on his breast, that he might die a slow and painful death. The Saint bore all these cruel tortures with great fortitude, and did not permit a murmur to escape his lips. During the following night, a heavenly splendor filled the prison, and an angel of the Lord came to him, and loosened the fetters and nails. At the same time, the prison door was opened, and he was permitted to pass out undisturbed

After his wonderful deliverance from the hands of the Saracens, he travelled towards the west, went through Dalmatia and Bavaria, visiting Metz, Cologne and other places. From Cologne, where he had freed his landlord from the epilepsy, he went to the Netherlands. The gift of miracles accompanied him everywhere. At Mechlin he extinguished a fire by making the sign of the cross over it. At Cambray, the doors of the Church were opened for him by angels; and in many other cities he quieted disturbances and rebellions. Above all, he visited and honored the relics of the Saints, and carried a number of them ever about him. The Saints, themselves, he venerated very much, and called on them to assist him on all occasions; and God granted him what he asked through their intercession. At last, he reached the city of Ghent, where he was most kindly received by the abbot Rambold, who desired him to remain in his monastery during the remainder of his life. The Saint remained there for a time to the great joy of the religious, who beheld in him a bright example of virtue. St. Macarius desired to revisit Asia once more, and was on his way to the Holy Land, when he was taken ill of a violent fever, and was forced to return to the monastery. He lay ill for some time, during which he prepared himself fervently for his approaching end, which he distinctly foretold. The city and neighboring province were infected with a pestilence at the time, but St. Macarius said, that as soon as he would die, it would cease. Soon after, on the 10th of April, with eyes raised towards heaven, he resigned his soul to God, and the city was freed. The tomb of St. Macarius became a refuge for all the sick, as a virtue went out from it, which cured all their ailments. Among other virtues so remarkable in this Saint was his deep humility. He despised the idle praises of men, and was much grieved when he noticed that others appreciated or honored him as a holy man. At first, he refused the proffered bishopric, on this account, and afterwards quietly resigned it because he could not endure the honors paid him, though he had held this position for some years in a most praiseworthy manner. But the more he fled from honor and esteem, the more God made his name glorious and renowned through his many miracles, thus verifying the words of the Gospel: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be humbled."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Macarius never felt more grieved than when God was offended by sin. Therefore he tried by all means to prevent others from committing sin, and offered continual penance to God in expiation of the sins committed in his youth. He who truly loves God, is pained when he sees or hears that God is offended by sin. He not only tries to avoid sin himself, but prevents others from offending God. Do you discover in yourself this mark of the love of God? If you can sometimes keep others from committing sin, why do you not do so? Do you endeavor to commit no more sins and thus abstain from offending your God? Do you daily repent of the sins you have committed? Have you ever shed a tear over them? True penitents have wept streams of tears over their sins, and among others, David gives testimony of himself: "I will water my couch with my tears." True penitents never permit a day to pass without heartily repenting of their sins, and asking God to pardon them. "A sinner should never think that he has sufficiently deplored his guilt; he should never cease doing penance, until he ceases to live;" thus writes St. Augustine.

II. St. Macarius daily honored and invoked the Saints, and what he asked through their intercession, God always granted. To venerate the Saints of God, according to the doctrine of the Catholic church, is praiseworthy and useful. In vain do heretics murmur against it. They are guilty of gross falsehood, when they accuse us of idolatry on this account. All honor given to the Saints redounds to the honor of God. We do not invoke them as gods to assist us by their own power, but as

mediators with God, that they may unite their prayers with ours at the throne of grace. Can any reasonable man find fault with this? Experience has often proved that we can more easily obtain favors through the intercession of the saints; hence it is evident that our invocation of them must be pleasing to God and useful to us. It is true that we do not always receive what we ask. But why is this? Besides other reasons, it is because, by our sins, we weaken the power of the Saints' intercession, or we do not efficaciously coöperate with their good will. "The prayers of the Saints have great power," says St. James of Nisibis; "but only when we labor to be such as they wish us to be, loving God above all things, which is the only desire of the Saints." "The intercession of the Saints is very beneficial to us," says St. John Chrysostom, "provided we coöperate with it." But if we obstinately persevere in sin, without repentance and correction, the favor of Saints will be of little or no benefit to us. Hence it was that God said through the mouth of His Prophets, that He would not spare the Jewish people, though His faithful servants Moses and Samuel prayed for them. "Why, so?" asks St. Chrysostom; "is then the intercession of the Saints powerless?" And he immediately answers: "By no means; for it is very powerful, provided you do not destroy it; provided you endeavor to obtain by penitence what you ask them to obtain for you by their prayers." Remember, this lesson well, and act accordingly. St. Macarius obtained all that he desired, through the intercession of the Saints. You obtain little or nothing.

You can find the reason of this difference in what is said above. St. James of Nisibis says: "The prayer of the Saints will produce its effect if	you unite your prayers with theirs, and if you produce fruits worthy of penance."
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ELEVENTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. LEO I., POPE.

Saint Leo, surnamed the Great, not only on account of his great erudition and holiness, but also from the many renowned deeds which he performed for the benefit of the Christian Church, was born in Rome, in the reign of Theodosius the Great. He passed his youth in the seminary of the Roman Clergy, and surpassed all his fellow-students in intelligence and ability. Hence he was employed by several Popes as Nuncio, and was entrusted with the most important affairs of the Church. At the death of Sixtus III. he was elected his successor, although he was at that time absent from Rome. He was appalled on being informed of it, and wished to decline receiving so high a dignity, deeming himself unworthy of it, but the Clergy persisted, and he was placed in the chair of St. Peter.

The Church of Christ was at that period in great tribulation. The Saint, therefore, first sought aid from God in long and fervent prayer: supplicating heaven to grant him wisdom and strength to govern the Church successfully, and to be supported in protecting her from so many heretics. Having finished this prayer, he began to work, and without permitting himself the slightest recreation, he applied all his time, all his learning, all his talents to the faithful discharge of the duties of his exalted station. To this end he directed every thought of his mind, every feeling of his heart. He commenced his great mission by reforming the morals of the faithful at Rome, by frequent preaching and still more by the example of his own edifying and virtuous life. To those not residing at Rome he sent the most instructive epistles, in which he exhorted and animated them to discipline and piety. He then took up arms against the heretics; such as the Manichees, the Arians, the Donatists, the Priscillianists and the Pelagians, who at that time had arisen in various places; while Nestorius, Entyches and Dioscorus, endeavored to overturn the Church with their new heresies. Against all these,

St. Leo, inflamed with holy zeal, battled victoriously. Writing to the bishops, he exhorted them watchfully to tend their flocks, and instructed them how to refute the dogmas of the heretics and guard the truth of the Catholic Church. He convened several Councils in which the teachings of the heretics were disproved and condemned. The most celebrated of these was the Council of Chalcedon, where 630 bishops were present. Before the opening of it, the holy Pope wrote a letter in which, in opposition to the heretics, he explained, and clearly confirmed, the mystery of the incarnation. This letter he sent to Flavian, bishop of Constantinople, where it was most needed. It is said that he laid this letter upon the grave of St. Peter, humbly requesting the holy apostle to correct it. After long prayers St. Peter appeared to the zealous Leo and said to him: "I have read and corrected the letter." And in truth the Council regarded this letter as the work of more than human wisdom, unanimously adopting its teachings as articles of faith.

While St. Leo thus, by unabating vigilance, happily conquered the heretics of the East, the Church in the West suffered most cruelly from Attila, the barbarous king of the Huns, who styled himself the Scourge of God. He had penetrated into the country with a powerful army, and devastation and ruin followed him wherever he went. Temples dedicated to the worship of the Most High were shamefully desecrated; convents razed or burned to the ground, and Rome itself threatened with pillage. St. Leo, having, both by precept and example, exhorted the inhabitants of the city to prayer and penance, magnanimously went to meet the destroyer, confiding in Him who holds in His mighty hand the hearts of kings. Attila had already reached Mantua, on the river Mincio, where St. Leo, clothed in his Papal robes and followed by a large number of ecclesiastics and nobles of Rome, appeared before him. All sank imploringly upon their knees before the haughty tyrant, except St. Leo, who, fearlessly and with dignity addressing him, demanded that he should abandon his designs of further destroying the country by marching towards Rome, and return at once to his own kingdom. St. Leo spoke with so much majesty, wisdom and eloquence, that Attila, visibly moved, promised to comply with his request. On being interrogated by some of his military commanders, why he had allowed himself to be so intimidated by a defenceless priest as to promise to retrace his steps, he replied that he had seen beside the priest a being more than human, who with drawn sword menaced him with death in case he should not, without delay, consent to St. Leo's demand.

The joy with which the holy Pope was received by the

people in Rome may easily be imagined: but he exhorted them to give thanks to Almighty God and to avert future punishment by reforming their lives.

A few years later, incited by the wicked Queen Eudoxia, Genseric, King of the Vandals, came to Italy. He was an Arian, but conducted himself more cruelly towards the Catholics than Attila, who was a heathen. When he approached Rome, St. Leo met him also, requesting him to be satisfied with the submission of the inhabitants of the city. But the influence of the holy man was much less over the heretic than it had been over the heathen king, and Genseric, marching into the city, gave it up to his soldiers to plunder, and dragged many of the inhabitants into slavery. He kept, however, the promise he had made to St. Leo, and neither burned the city nor damaged any of the churches, nor killed any of the citizens. After the departure of Genseric, St. Leo told the Romans in his sermons that God had sent this pillage not only to punish them for the ingratitude they had manifested towards Him for their wonderful delivery from the tyrant Attila, but also for despising His word and for their licentious conduct. If, therefore, they wished to prevent a similar punishment in future, they must show more gratitude to God, strive to reform their lives, and hear the word of God more frequently. To the captive Romans he sent large alms, and admonished them to remain steadfast in the true faith. He also ransomed as many as he could from captivity.

It would take too much space to relate all the good deeds of this truly great Saint for the honor of God, the protection of the true faith, the earthly comfort and the eternal welfare of those committed to his charge. There is, however, no doubt that he was one of the most erudite, high-minded and holy Popes who ever governed the Church of Christ. His administration lasted for twenty-one years, when, replete with merit, he was called by God to receive his eternal reward in the year 461.

One hundred and ninety-six sermons and one hundred and forty-one epistles by this holy Pope are yet extant, by which it is clearly proved that for more than 1300 years the Catholic Church taught and believed all that is now taught and believed. In his sermons, which are full of heavenly wisdom, he not only incontestably proves those articles of faith which at that time were attacked by heretics, but also most fervently admonishes Catholics to do penance and other good works, and especially enjoins the observance of the forty days' fast. His epistles are addressed to the Emperors as well as to the bishops. Of the crowned heads he requests aid against the heretics, and protection for the Catholic Church. The bishops he encourages to

refute the heretic dogmas and to guard their flocks with all diligence. In everything he wrote he evinces an unwearied and truly apostolic zeal for the honor of God and the prosperity of His holy Church.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Leo informs the Romans, without hesitation, that the pillage of the city was caused by nothing else than their ingratitude, the licentiousness of their conduct, and their contempt for the word of God. The same may justly be said of every calamity that comes over a city or country—such as famine, war, pestilence or other plagues. Men only owe it to themselves. God punishes their sins by such means. "It is certain," says St. Jerome, "that to our sin we owe famine, war, pestilence and whatever else we suffer." Holy writ presents so many examples of this that no one can possibly doubt its truth. Whenever God menaced His chosen people, the Jews, with a general calamity, He invariably made known to them that the visitation would come upon them on account of their sins. They themselves recognized it, and many times freely acknowledged it. "For we have not obeyed Thy commandments," says the pious Tobias, "and therefore are we delivered to spoil and to captivity and death, and are made a fable and a reproach to all nations amongst which Thou hast scattered us" (Tobias iii.) The surest means to prevent such punishments and avert them from the land, is to do true penance; because true penance reconciles God to His offending creatures, as we are taught by numerous examples in Holy Writ. It may be noticed specially of the Jews, that as often as they returned with their whole heart to God, did penance, prayed and fasted, so often did He

remit the threatened punishment; or if they were already bowed down under its infliction, He turned it from them. "Let us be penitent," said the pious Judith to the people of Bethulia, "and with many tears let us beg pardon" (Judith viii.).

Should we at any time be visited by unexpected sorrow or adversity, it will be well that we examine ourselves and see whether sin or impenitence is not perhaps the cause of it.

II. The only care of St. Leo, when he entered the papal functions, was faithfully to fulfil the onerous duties its proper administration imposed upon him. All his time, all his knowledge, all his faculties were given to it; he thought of no recreation but only of discharging his duty. In whatever station of life you may be, you have some peculiar duties and obligations. Strive to comply with them. Woe to you if you spend more time in idleness or empty enjoyments than in the work which your station requires, and which you, by reason of your position, are bound to perform. How will you stand when it is said to you, "Give an account of thy stewardship?" (St. Luke xvi.). This means, as interpreted by Cornelius á Lapide, "Give an account of thy life, thy station, the work entrusted to thee, thy time, thy abilities and other gifts which God gave thee, that thou mightst use them to His honor, and to thine own and other men's salvation."

TWELFTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. SABAS, MARTYR, AND ST. ALFERIUS, CONFESSOR.

St. Sabas was born among the savage Goths, but his parents were Catholics, who, although surrounded by Arians, remained constant in the true faith. They were very anxious to have their young son thoroughly instructed in the Catholic religion, and to implant in his mind the fear of the Lord, that in after life he might be armed to repulse the seductions of the heretics. Sabas took the instructions sedulously to heart, avoided all unnecessary intercourse with heretics, despised their books, and never allowed himself to read one of them, fearing that their contents would poison his mind. In addition, he possessed a chastity so angelical that he fled not only from all society with those of the opposite sex, but avoided all who polluted their tongues with impure words or songs. The time that he was not at his labor he devoted to prayer. He was an enemy to all those pleasures in which youth too often seek delight, though never without offending God. He disciplined his body by severe penances and fasting. But little acquainted with the liberal arts, he was, however, master of the sacred science of the Saints, and by the aid of this knowledge, he converted many of his countrymen from idolatry or heresy to the true faith, and induced others to change their wicked conduct to a pious and edifying life. At the death of his parents, he employed the greater part of his inheritance in the maintenance of those Catholics who were oppressed and persecuted by the Goths. In the protection of the true faith he always showed himself courageous and undaunted, as he desired nothing so ardently as to shed his blood for the cause of Christ. His desire was at length gratified during the cruel persecution of the Catholics, by Athanaric, King of the Goths. This tyrant, to please the Emperor Valens, had gone over to the Arians; and after he had been defeated in war against a Gothic King, he, like a heathen, sought to quench his rage on the Christians. He issued an order that at all places where it was suspected that Catholics resided, an idol placed upon a wagon should be carried about, and all those who refused to worship it, should be instantly put to death, or burned in their houses. A large number of men and women took refuge in the churches with their children to save their lives. The tyrant, however, commanded that the sacred edifices should be set on fire, so that all within their

walls should be burned to death. This proceeding seemed too cruel even to the officers of Athanaric, who only demanded of the Catholics that they should eat some of the meat that had been sacrificed to the idols, by which means they might save their lives. But this also the intrepid Catholics refused, willing to die rather than so to pollute themselves. At the place where St. Sabas resided, the heathens were so prepossessed in his favor on account of his virtues and kindness, that they were determined to save his life. Convinced that it would be in vain to induce him to renounce his faith by eating of the meat, they resolved that, on the arrival of the imperial commissary, they would affirm with an oath that no Christian lived in their village. When he was informed of this, Sabas protested most earnestly against this intention, partly on account of his longing to suffer martyrdom, and partly because he would not consent that, for the sake of saving his life, they should offend God by a falsehood. Hence, having been summoned before the imperial commissary on his arrival, and asked concerning his religion and possessions, Sabas replied: "I am a Christian: my worldly possessions I have divided among the poor, retaining nothing but the miserable clothes which cover my body." The commissary, deeming it beneath his dignity to waste further words upon him, gave orders to drive him out of the village, which was accordingly done.

The year following, the persecution against the Catholics became still more cruel, and St. Sabas was torn from his bed during the night and dragged almost naked, over thorns and through hedges, being meanwhile most inhumanly whipped. A priest, in whose house St. Sabas lodged, was seized at the same time, but he was less barbarously treated. Not a word of complaint, however, escaped the lips of the Saint during this terrible suffering, but offering all his torments to God, he bore them with a cheerful heart. An angel, sent by the Almighty, came to him during the following night and healed all his wounds; which enraged those in whose charge he was to such a degree, that they bound his hands and feet together, and hung him thus, with his head downwards, to the axletree of a cart which they drove heavily laden to the city. When at nightfall, they stopped at an inn, the hostess, seeing the terrible spectacle, loosened the cords by which St. Sabas was tied. He however did not escape; and the soldiers awaking at day-break, were greatly surprised to find him still there. At length, having arrived at their destination, they offered him and the priest meat which had been sacrificed to the idols, saying that Atharides, the imperial commissary, commanded them to eat of the same. "Who is this Atharides," asked St. Sabas, "who dares to command what God forbids? Whom shall we obey,

our God, or Atharides? Our God is truly an infinitely greater Lord; and to Him we owe obedience." The same was said by the priest, who added that he had much rather die than touch a morsel of the meat. Atharides, infuriated, ordered that St. Sabas should be drowned in the next river. At this the Saint rejoiced, giving thanks to God that He had vouchsafed him the grace to die for his glory. Standing on the banks of the stream, the soldiers consented to release him, if he would flee to another country. But he said, "Do not trifle, my friends, but carry your orders into execution, otherwise I shall not be grateful to you. I already behold glorified souls descending from heaven to lead me to eternal happiness. Do not deprive me of the crown which awaits me above." When he had said this, the executioners bound his hands and feet and precipitated him into the river. This took place in the year of our Lord, 372. His holy body was found by the christians and sent to Cappadocia, his home.



To the little which I have related of the holy martyr, Sabas, I will add a few words concerning a sainted Confessor who also ended his life on this day. It is St. Alferius, founder of the monastery of Cava.

He was born at Salerno, Italy, and was descended from the Princes of Lombardy. By his virtues, abilities and early acquired knowledge, he became so celebrated that the Prince of Salerno raised him to high honor, gave him apartments in his own palace, and availed himself of his advice in the most important affairs. Once he sent him as ambassador to the King of France. Having reached the monastery of the holy Archangel Michael, he was taken seriously ill. During his sickness, which was very tedious, he came to the knowledge of the instability of all temporal things, and the vanity of all earthly honors, and began to be disgusted with the idea of serving a mere mortal master. Hence he came to the determination, that if he should regain his health, he would serve no one but the immortal Lord of heaven and earth. As it pleased God to restore his health, he at once executed his design. At that time it happened that the holy Abbot Odilo, returning to his monastery at Cluny, lodged at the monastery where Alferius was; and no sooner had the latter become acquainted with the holy man, than he begged him to take him to Cluny and number him among his religious. Odilo consented to his wishes, and Alferius was so fervent, so zealous in ascending the rugged path of sanctity that it was justly thought he would soon arrive at its summit. After some years the admin-

istration of several monasteries was intrusted to him ; but although he fulfilled his duties to the entire satisfaction of those under his charge, he yet desired to be released from them; as he was thus prevented from bestowing as much time on the meditation of the holy mysteries as he wished. Hence he secretly fled to a high mountain called Fenestra, where he built a small hut in a large cavern, with the intention of there passing the remainder of his life, unknown to men, in the service of the Most High. His solitude, however, did not last long, as the reputation of his holy life attracted to his dwelling several, both Patricians and Plebeians, who desired to remain with him and live under his guidance. This was the origin of the renowned monastery of Cava, and also of many others, which were regulated according to the rules of St. Alferius. The occupation of the Saint and those under him consisted in praising God, in holy meditation, in prayer, in fasting, and in other pious exercises. Alferius was a model to all, and every one endeavored to the utmost to imitate him. Among the spiritual teachings which he gave to his religious was this—that we must not neglect or despise the smallest thing concerning God or our salvation. Hence we ought to avoid with great care, even the most trifling sin, as for instance, a white lie, etc., but exercise ourselves in good works, and control ourselves in little things ; according to the saying of Christ: He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater ; but whoever heeds not small sins, exposes himself to the danger of falling easily into those which are greater. By the foregoing rule, and many similar ones, the holy Superior led those under his care to true virtue and sanctity, and had the happiness to count as many perfect religious as he had subordinates. The holy man, in all his actions and endeavors, had no other thought than the honor of God and the salvation of souls. For this cause God, who honors those who honor Him, made him the recipient of many graces, which secured to him the high esteem of all classes of people.

Among other gifts he possessed that of performing miracles, and also foretelling future events. To illustrate the former it is only necessary to record one example. Not far from the dwelling of St. Alferius a citizen of Salerno was assassinated. The body was carried into the Church of the monastery with the intention of its being buried there. St. Alferius, however, requested that it should be left upon the bier and be buried the following morning. He spent the night in prayer by the corpse, and when those who had brought it came the next morning to bury it, the dead, raised to new life by the prayers of the Saint, stood before them, joining his praises to God with theirs and

giving most humble thanks to the holy man. To give an instance of the latter, the following will serve. A man was brought to him one day, who being possessed by the devil, was fettered with iron chains. The Saint was asked to deliver the poor unfortunate, as he had already delivered many others. St. Alferius, however, spoke with prophetic inspiration and said: "He will not be delivered during my life, but after my death." It came to pass as he had foretold, for when they brought the possessed to the grave of the Saint, the unclean spirit, howling, left him.

As space will not allow me to dwell on many events of his life, I will only give a short sketch of his happy end. He had attained the advanced age of 120 years, having passed by far the greater part of his life in the fervent service of God. But what astonished every one was the fact that he had retained all his faculties unimpaired. He administered his functions until his very last day without difficulty, and died without having been sick. Christ our Lord appeared to him six days before his end and said: "On the day of my last supper thou shalt come to me." The Saint, rejoicing at these tidings, longed for the appointed day to come. As it at length dawned, he cleansed his conscience, which had never been stained by great evil, by a contrite confession, went to Church, performed the usual ceremonies, sang High Mass, administered the Holy Communion to his religious, washed their feet, divided alms among the poor, conferred his function as Superior upon a very virtuous friar, named Leo, and ordered him to go to dinner with the other religious. He himself went into his cell to pray, and while praying gave his soul to God in the year 1050, on the 12th of April. Some of his religious went after dinner to his cell and found him, but in so tranquil a position, that at first they thought him still praying, and it was not till after some time that they perceived that he had gone to a better world. The many miracles which were performed at his grave are proofs of the power of his intercession at the throne of the Almighty.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. It was very fortunate for St. Sabas, that he had parents who in his youth, so thoroughly instructed him in the true faith, thus preventing his being seduced by the heretics in after life. Very praiseworthy was it also that he endeavored to maintain himself in the Catholic religion by avoiding all intercourse with heretics, despising their books and never reading them for fear of drinking in their poison. Catholic parents commit great sin if they neglect to instruct their children early in their religion, especially in places where they are surrounded by heretics. All Catholics sin greatly when they endanger their faith by a godless life, by unnecessary, or too frequent intercourse with heretics, by reading heretical books, &c. Such reading is strictly interdicted by the true Church, therefore they sin who read heretical books without permission of their spiritual director, either out of curiosity, or for any other reason. The excuse of being a good Catholic, and therefore in no danger of going astray, from the true faith, has no value before God. If there is in reality no such danger, the interdict of the church still remains and the transgressors of it commit a great sin. And who can say that he is not in danger, if without being obliged by his functions, or in order to refute the heretical dogmas, he reads such works? Sabas was a Saint, and his faith was firmly established, and yet he feared to inhale the poison hidden in such books. Have not those much more reason to fear whose faith is not so firmly established, and who, besides, lead

not a perfect, but a very imperfect, perhaps even sinful life? One may often in the present age, gather from the expressions of such persons that they are thoroughly infected with the poison of heresy, otherwise they would not speak so derisively of their holy religion and of the articles of the true faith, as, worse than heretics, they frequently do, to the scandal of all true Catholics. Beware of such books, after the example of St. Sabas, and keep the words of St. Leo in your memory, who says: "Although in the books of the heretics much may be found that has the appearance of piety or erudition, still they are always tainted with the poison of heresy."

II. One of the most important teachings of St. Alferius was, that we must shun even the most trifling sin. St. Sabas had the very same disposition of mind, and therefore would not permit that for his sake any falsehood should be uttered. He preferred to die rather than consent that his life should be saved by a lie. So great a horror had the holy man for even venial sin! Why and how you should avoid venial sin, I have already somewhere else told you; I shall therefore, here, only say a few words about lying. How many hundred lies have you allowed to be told about you, or have even given authority to be told? How many have you told yourself, either to prevent a reproof, to hide a fault, or for some other trifling reason? How many to please others, or in jest? Oh! how far are you from following the example of St. Sabas!

At least endeavor to imitate him in future. Abhor a lie—never mind how trivial you may suppose it—it is an offence to God. Should not this alone be reason enough to detest it? The Almighty, who is Eternal Truth, hates both lies and liars. Satan only, who is the father of lies, loves them, and regards liars as his children. Does not that suffice to make lying abominable to you? “Guard yourselves against lying, my brethren! for all who are addicted to lying are children of the devil.” Thus speaks St. Augustine. I know there are some who think, and even aver, without hesitation, that it is no sin if one tells a falsehood jestingly, or in order to assist a neighbor, or to prevent contention or other evil. This, however, is a great error. On the contrary, it is quite certain that each lie is sinful, although not

in like degree, for by telling lies purposely to wrong others we commit great sin. The so-called white lies are generally only venial sins, but they are sins nevertheless and offend the Majesty of God. Hence it is certain that we are not allowed to tell a lie, even to save our life, or prevent great misfortune by so doing. “No lies are allowed,” says St. Bernard; “all lies are sinful.” “The word of God teaches us,” says Pope Innocent III., “that it is not allowed to sin, even to save one’s own life.” St. Blaise says, after the words of the Apostle: “It is never allowed to do evil that good may come of it.” Lies themselves are evil, hence are never allowed. “The wrong we do to God by lying is greater than any evil we may endeavor to prevent, or than all the good we seek to attain by means of it.” Thus teaches St. Augustine.

THIRTEENTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. HERMENEGILD, MARTYR.

In the year 558, there reigned, in Spain, an Arian King, by the name of Leovigild. He had two sons, Hermenegild and Recared, whom he had brought up as heretics. The former he crowned King of Seville, the latter remained with him at Toledo. Hermenegild afterwards married Ingundis, or Ingundis, a French princess, who was not only a zealous Catholic, but also led a very virtuous life. Goswinda, the grandmother of Hermenegild, a very bigoted Arian, left nothing untried to persuade Ingundis to renounce the Catholic faith and become a heretic. At first she used flatteries and caresses, and when she saw that they were unavailing, she had recourse to invectives and slanders, and even proceeded to maltreat her in the most brutal manner. All this, however, failed to mislead the pious Ingundis, who, meanwhile, endeavored to win her husband to the Catholic faith. In this

she was aided by St. Leander, Bishop of Seville, who at last so completely succeeded in his efforts, that Hermenegild openly renounced the Arian heresy, and professed the Catholic faith. Leovigild, enraged at his son's conversion, threatened to deprive him of his crown, and even to take his life, if he refused to return to the Arians. The prince, upheld and encouraged by his pious wife and St. Leander, sent word to his father that he was ready to obey him in all reasonable things, but that so far as his faith was concerned, he would much rather lose crown and sceptre, kingdom, and all earthly possessions, than swerve from it in the least. The father, without hesitation, marched with a large army against Hermenegild, and besieged Seville where the Saint held his court. The siege lasted a whole year, until the city was at length forced to surrender. Hermenegild secretly fled and sought refuge with the Romans. Discovering, however, that they designed to deliver him up to his father, he again fled and came to Cordova, where he was finally obliged to surrender himself with the city into the hands of Leovigild. When the Saint perceived that there were no means of escape, he repaired to the church, in hopes that his father would honor the sacred walls and receive him again as his son. Recared, his younger brother, pitying his misfortunes, went to him and promised him his father's clemency and favor, if he would go to him and ask his pardon upon bended knees. Hermenegild did as his brother advised; throwing himself at the feet of his father, who had entered the church, he begged for the return of his favor.

The father treated him kindly until, having left the church, they arrived at his camp, when he gave orders that he should be divested of his kingly robes and be cast, heavily chained, into a dark tower. The innocent Prince suffered the same hardships that the most wicked criminals had to endure. He was only given sufficient food to sustain life. In this time of bitter anguish, Hermenegild had recourse to God, and passed much of his time in devout exercises. He asked only for strength to withstand the approaching storm. Turning from earth, all his thoughts were directed towards heaven. Several times did his father offer to open the doors of his prison and to take him again into favor, if he would abjure the Catholic faith. Hermenegild's answer, however, was always that he would rather lose his earthly crown and suffer the king's displeasure, imprisonment, and even death itself, than forsake the faith of his church.

That these were not idle words became manifest from the events which soon took place. When the sacred Easter festivals approached, Leovigild sent an Arian Bishop to Hermenegild in

the dungeon, with the command to receive from his hands the communion, as it was the only means whereby he could regain the favor of his father, his liberty, and also his lost kingdom. The Saint severely reproached the presumption of the Bishop, and bidding him go, repeated his resolution to lose his life rather than his faith. It was on this occasion that he made use of the memorable words: "The loss of a temporary crown on earth is easy to be borne, when we know that a much more glorious and eternal one awaits us in heaven." No sooner was Leovigild apprised of this, than he sent some executioners to the dungeon to announce to Hermenegild that he was to die forthwith. The Saint knelt fearlessly down, and raising his eyes to Heaven, commended his soul to the mercy of his Creator. One of the executioners then clove his head with an axe, and his body fell to the ground which was covered with his brains.

The same night the dungeon where Hermenegild's corpse was lying was illuminated by heavenly light, and divine music was heard proceeding from it. Leovigild, whose conscience already reproached him for the cruelty he had exercised towards his son, was, on being informed of this, torn by remorse. In his last illness he recommended his second son Recared, to St. Leander, that he also might be instructed in the Catholic religion as Hermenegild had been. St. Leander vainly exhorted the king to return himself into the bosom of the true church. The unhappy man, although acknowledging the truth of the Catholic religion, would not embrace it, either from fear of the courtiers, or from some other unworthy reason, as is related by Gregory the Great. Thus the father went to everlasting perdition, while St. Hermenegild, his son, triumphantly entered his heavenly kingdom as a glorious martyr.

St. Gregory, also, gives it as his opinion, that the conversion of the whole country, which took place soon after St. Hermenegild's death, is principally to be ascribed to the blood which the Saint shed for his faith, and to his intercession at the throne of the Almighty. His words are as follows: "If Hermenegild had not given his blood for the truth, the kingdom would never have come to the knowledge of it. This, however, came to pass after the words of the Apostle: "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die first, but after its death it brings forth much fruit" (I. Cor. xv.). We know that this was fulfilled by our Saviour as our head. Here we see a similar effect by one of His members. One of the Visigoths died that many might rise into life. One little grain fell to the earth, and from it there sprang a rich harvest of souls."

The glorious martyrdom of St. Hermenegild took place,

according to Baronius, in the year 584, on the thirteenth day of April, on which day he is commemorated throughout the whole kingdom of Spain.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Indegundis, the pious wife of Hermenegild, won her husband, who was educated in the Arian heresy, back to the truth of the Catholic religion; and thus gradually persuaded him to acknowledge and embrace the same. Next to God, therefore, was the Saint indebted to his wife for obtaining the divine truth, and hence for his salvation. Ah, how beautiful it is when husband and wife, restraining each other from evil, and encouraging each other in doing what is right, both go together into heaven! But on the other hand, how dreadful, how wicked, when one restrains the other from doing good, encouraging thereby the commission of evil, and both go together to everlasting perdition! These observations should lead married people to examine themselves, and reflect how they have acted towards each other in the past, as also how they intend to act in the future. Particularly ought those Catholics, who are married to such as profess a different faith, learn from the pious Indegundis to endeavor to convert their husband or wife to the true Church. To this effect, it is necessary that they evince zeal in the fulfilment of the duties of their religion, and in the kindest manner make their partner acquainted with the divine truth of the Catholic faith. Above all, however, ought they to pray daily to God that He would aid and strengthen them in their endeavors by His Grace. This is a subject which those whom it most concerns should consider well.

II. Hermenegild, the Son, be-

comes a Catholic, and martyrdom opens to him the gates of heaven: Leovigild, the father, although recognizing the truth of the Catholic faith, remains a heretic, dies as such, and goes to hell. How terrible is the lesson! How the father will repent during eternity, that he, out of vain fear of losing his crown, or by an insurrection being deprived of life by his heretic subjects, did not embrace the Catholic faith! Just so will be the eternal grief of those who are not Catholics, that they, persuaded by trifling circumstances, continued and died in their error. On the contrary, how inexpressibly great will be the joy of St. Hermenegild, through all eternity, that he, persuaded by his pious wife, determined to receive the Catholic faith, and rather lose his kingdom, suffer cruel imprisonment, even death itself, than abandon the once acknowledged divine truth. His joy all righteous converts may partake of, if they remain firm in the true faith and conduct themselves accordingly. Many of these may in consequence lose their temporal goods, and have other trials to endure, sometimes even from bad Catholics. But hardly one among them will be called upon to suffer such loss, imprisonment or death as St. Hermenegild. Why should they not be as constant as this holy prince was? In consideration of the much greater eternal and heavenly kingdom he would gain, it was not difficult for him to lose sceptre and crown, and even to be deprived of life. If the prince had abandoned the Catholic faith, he would most

assuredly have escaped a violent death, and continued in the possession of a temporal kingdom ; but as he had most certainly to lose this by death in the course of a few short years, he would, with it, also have lost the kingdom of heaven. He would have delivered himself from a violent temporal death, but would have precipitated himself into death eternal and everlasting perdition, where he would have to suffer incomparably more than he suffered upon earth. Did he not act much more wisely, when, for

the sake of the true faith he not only disdained a short temporal reign, but also bore persecution and torture, than if, by inconstancy, he had lost heaven and had drawn upon himself ceaseless torments ?

In conclusion, may every one take to heart what Christ our Lord Himself said, and be comforted by His words when he suffers, on account of his conversion, the loss of temporal goods : "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (St. Matt. v.).

FOURTEENTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. LIDWINA, VIRGIN.

This Saint, well known in the Catholic Church for her prolonged sufferings, and still more on account of her heroic patience under them, was born at Schiedam, in Holland, in the year 1380, of poor but pious parents. God had bestowed upon her such marvellous beauty, that she had barely attained the age of twelve years when she had many suitors for her hand. Lidwina, however, refused all, giving as a reason that she had devoted herself, soul and body, to the Almighty. In order to prevent further importunity, she earnestly begged God to change her beauty so effectually, that, instead of admiration, she might inspire those who beheld her with aversion. God granted her petition ; for when fifteen years old, standing one day with her companions on the ice, looking at the people, who, as is the custom of the country, were skating up and down, one of them fell against her accidentally and threw her down. She fell with such force that she broke one of her ribs ; and from that hour her suffering commenced. Sickness and pains of many descriptions followed each other, and all remedies proved ineffectual. For many years she could neither walk, stand, nor even move a limb without experiencing great agony. The slightest nourishment she took caused her intense anguish. Another result of her broken rib was a fearful abscess, which was alive with worms, while her

whole body was in that state of burning fever which accompanies the breaking out of an abscess. Her right arm was so completely covered with sores to the shoulder, that it was entirely withered. In her head she experienced an incessant pricking, as if it were filled with needles and knives, while at the same time she was tormented with toothache and sore throat, and frequently vomited until the blood streamed through her mouth, nose, ears and eyes. She had a continual pain in her side, her lungs were ulcerated, her kidneys were inflamed, and her liver hardened. In one word, there is scarcely a disease with which she was not afflicted, so that the prolongation of her life was rightly considered miraculous, as besides these complicated disorders, she was not able during thirty years to take as much nourishment or sleep as would suffice a person in good health for three days. To crown all this misery she was very poor and almost forsaken; there were even some who calumniated her; and pronounced her to be a witch. Lidwina, for the first two or three years, found it very difficult to resign herself to her sad condition; but God sent a pious priest to her relief, who taught her to endure her sufferings with patience. He advised her first and before all things, to contemplate the passion of Christ, to meditate upon the holy mysteries, and to consider what the Son of God had suffered for her sake; secondly, to think of the martyrdom the Saints endured out of love to Christ; thirdly, repeatedly to remember the great and eternal recompense with which God rewards a short earthly suffering; finally, in order to receive from the Almighty the grace of patience, that she should frequently partake of the Holy Communion, and repeat short prayers during her pains. This was the advice of the pious priest, which St. Lidwina followed scrupulously, soon perceiving its good effects. Her desire to regain health, her longing for human aid, her despondency in her suffering, all vanished, and no word, no sign of impatience escaped her lips henceforth. She resigned herself completely to the will of God; thanked and praised Him during her greatest agonies, nay, even desired to suffer still more. No one could look at Lidwina, whose whole body seemed to be a mangled mass of torture, without commiseration; she, however, always appeared bright and cheerful. To those who came to visit her, she gave wholesome admonitions, and converted many a hardened sinner whom they brought to her. Among these was one who insisted upon confessing all his vices to her, although at first she refused to listen to them. When he had finished the recital, she recommended him, as a penance, to lie upon one side, without any change of position, during the whole of the following night. And behold, a miracle of grace is wrought!

The man was entirely converted through this penance, for not being able to sleep, remaining in one position became intolerable to him, and this awakened the thought: "How shall I be able to endure the flames of hell, if lying upon a soft bed is unendurable?" Moved by this reflection, he confessed with repentance his sins the next day, and commenced a life of penance. Other sinners she converted by offering for them her sufferings to the Almighty, and praying for the grace of repentance for them. She also offered her sufferings for the souls in purgatory, and saw many, whom she had thus released, ascending to heaven. Almost everything that was sent as alms to her, she distributed to the needy. Our Lord, wishing to place this Christian heroine, as a model of patience before the whole world, did not omit to give her spiritual comfort to strengthen her. Several times her guardian angel was sent to her, who, by representing to her the joys of heaven and the torments of purgatory and hell, endowed her with patience. Christ Himself, accompanied by His Holy Mother and other Saints, she saw frequently in her visions. On one occasion He showed her a beautiful wreath of flowers, in which, however, several blossoms were wanting. "My daughter," said He, "this wreath must first be completed." She comprehended that she had still longer to suffer before she could receive the crown of eternal glory, and bowed her head in submission to the will of the Most High. The hour of her death was also made known to her by Heaven, and she became still more fervent in those exercises of virtue by which she had made her sufferings so acceptable in the sight of God. When she had received the holy sacraments, Christ, our Lord, the Blessed Virgin and many Saints appeared to her, comforted her, and invited her to come to receive the heavenly reward that awaited her. On Tuesday in Easter-week, having requested all who were with her to forgive her if she had ever offended them, she requested to be left alone, in order that, in solitude, she might pour out her ardent love to her Saviour. All left her except a little boy who was much attached to her, when the Saint abandoned herself to her holy aspirations to be united with her God. Her prayers were granted; death closed her eyes, and her soul ascended to heaven in the year 1433, after she had suffered so heroically for thirty-eight years.

After her death she was found to have worn a penitential girdle of hair-cloth. From her body, which had so long been one mass of wounds, ulcers and worms, every sign of disease suddenly disappeared, and her face became wondrously beautiful, and beaming with a divine radiance. At the hour of her death it was made known to many that she had gone to heaven.

Many miracles were wrought on sick people by laying upon them the girdle she had worn, or other things that she had used. The divine gifts of restoring the sick to health, revealing hidden things, and foretelling future events had been already bestowed on her during her life. Her holy relics are at Brussels, where they are preserved with great honor.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Lidwina suffers, during 38 years, from many an extremely painful disease. It is easy to say 38 years, but it is a long time to live. What, however, is this time compared to Eternity? The 38 years, however painful, will come to an end; but not the terrible eternity of those who are cast into hell. Ah! never, never, never, can it end, if it did it would not be Eternity! Now, let me ask you: if you were sure that immediately after the commission of a mortal sin, you would be punished by a sickness that would last 38 years; nay, even with toothache or headache that should continue only 38 hours, would you commit the sin? I believe not; why, then, do you so often and so wantonly commit evil, when you well know that not only suffering for 38 years, but for eternity, not one but innumerable pains await you in hell? What answer have you to give? Probably you may say that you hope to escape those pains by doing penance. But then I ask you: Have not thousands of sinners, who are in hell, entertained the same hope, but it has deceived them to their irreparable loss? And may not this be the same with you? How great, therefore, must be your daring arrogance, when, by committing sin, you place yourself in danger of being cast into everlasting suffering and sorrow! If you intend to act as a reasonable being, take into consideration the eternal suffering of hell and resolve earnestly to avoid all sin.

II. St. Lidwina preserves her patience by the contemplation of the passion of Christ; by the remembrance of the sufferings of the saints; by the consideration of the pains of hell and the never ending joys of heaven. Her example gives you the strongest remedies against impatience in all your trials, whatsoever may be the nature of them. Think, or address yourself in the following manner:—my Saviour has suffered much more out of love to me. The holy martyrs, saints and confessors have endured much more to gain heaven. The affliction that weighs me down is nothing compared with what the lost souls experience in hell. My Cross, heavy as it is, and long as it seems to cleave to me, is yet short as compared to the immeasurable and eternal reward which our Lord has promised me in heaven. With thoughts like these was St. Lidwina as well as other saints enabled to drink not only submissively but cheerfully, the cup of bitterness. Imitate her example. Above all things, let the first point—regarding the love and the example of your Saviour—be recommended to your frequent reflection. "Let us," writes St. Paul, "run by patience to the fight proposed to us, looking on Jesus, the anchor and finisher of faith" (Heb. xii.). And St. Bernard says, "If impatience irritates you, think how much your Saviour suffered for your sake."

FIFTEENTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. BENEDICT, THE YOUNGER.

The following tale may appear to some incredible, perhaps even ridiculous; but the authorities from which it is derived leave no doubt about its truth; especially when we consider that God manifests His omnipotence in numberless ways.

The facts are as follows: In a village about three days' journey from Avignon, was born, in the year 1165, Benedict, called the Younger. He lost his father early, and he assisted his mother, who had given him a Christian education, by tending a small flock of sheep, which she had entrusted to his care, he being at this time ten years old. He was almost continually in the field, leading a pious, innocent life. His only pleasure was to pray, and he daily employed several hours in this exercise. When twelve years of age, he was chosen by God to perform a work which has been the admiration of all posterity. Being with his flock on the thirteenth day of September in the year 1177, he heard, three times, the following words: "Benedict, my dear child, listen to the voice of Jesus Christ." Benedict looked around, but perceived no one. Hence he said, "Who art thou, Sir, that art speaking to me? I hear thee, but I do not see thee." Upon this, the voice said again: "Fear not, my child, I am Christ thy God." "What dost thou wish me to do?" asked Benedict. "I desire," replied Christ, "that thou shalt leave thy flock, and construct a bridge over the Rhone." "I do not know where this river is; and I dare not leave my sheep," replied Benedict. "Obey my words," said Christ; "I will take care of thy sheep. Thou wilt soon meet a companion who will lead thee to the river. Follow my instructions." "But," said Benedict, "of what shall I build the bridge? All the money I possess is three pence, which is, surely, not sufficient." "Place thy trust in me," replied Christ, "and trouble not thyself about the rest." The innocent shepherd-boy without reply, sallied forth, and suddenly perceived a youth beside him who said: "I have come to accompany thee to the river, over which thou shalt build a bridge." When they came to the appointed place, Benedict, seeing the breadth as well as the rapidity of the stream, said to his companion: "It is impossible to erect a bridge here!" The youth, who without doubt was an angel, replied: "Dismiss all doubt, and obey the Lord's command. Cross the river, and when

at Avignon, go to the bishop and declare to him the work which God has bidden thee to perform." After these words the angel disappeared. When Benedict arrived in the city, he went to the bishop, telling him that he had been sent by God, to build a bridge across the Rhone at Avignon. The bishop laughed at the boy's speech, and believing him out of his mind, sent him to the town administrator, thinking he would soon be cured of his derangement. Benedict, going to the administrator, said, "Sir! God has sent me to build a bridge over the Rhone, and you must assist me." The administrator, to get rid of the silly boy, pointed to an immense stone, lying in the yard, and which could hardly have been moved by the united strength of thirty men, saying, "you may take the stone there, and use it as the corner stone of your bridge." Benedict made the sign of the cross upon the stone, raised it, and placing it on his head, he carried it towards the river, as rapidly as if it was but a pound in weight. The administrator, the bishop, and numerous others who witnessed this, were amazed and began to believe what Benedict had told them. In this belief they were still more confirmed, when they saw the many miracles he wrought upon the sick whom his garments touched. Eighteen were counted who thus regained health on the very first day. Hence it soon was no longer doubted that God had chosen this innocent shepherd-boy to perform the great work, and a large sum of money was immediately collected for the erection of the bridge. Benedict set to work and directed every thing with such science and ability, that the most skilful architects could not sufficiently express their surprise. In the course of seven years the bridge was completed, and stood there a monument of the divine wisdom and power which had aided Benedict's work, by performing what no architect had believed possible; as it was never imagined that a stone bridge could have been constructed over a river whose course is so rapid as that of the Rhone. How Benedict was honored by the clergy as well as the laity it is not easy to describe. His pious conduct, however, added to the esteem in which he was held by every one. He sought no pleasure, no delight in worldly things, accepted neither presents nor rewards, but spent most of his time in devout exercises. He erected a small chapel upon the bridge, to which he daily retired several times in order to be alone with his God. He also mortified his body by fasting and other penances. An impure word was never known to pass his lips, and he endeavored to prevent others from uttering such words, exhorting them to walk in the right path. He abhorred the very shadow of all that was not perfectly pure and chaste. In one word, his whole conduct was

blameless and edifying. During his prayers he had many divine revelations. Among others, it was told him, that one of the piers of the bridge, which, as related above, he had built, was, by the instigation of the evil one, destroyed. Benedict was praying, when this happened, at a place a few miles from the city. Suddenly rising from his knees, he said to his companions, "Come, let us return, that we may restore the pier which the enemy of man has destroyed." His companions concluded from these words that God had revealed to him, during his prayers, what had taken place at the bridge during his absence.

When the bridge was at length happily completed, God revealed to him his approaching end, and he prepared himself for it, not only by redoubled fervor in prayer, but also, by rigorous penances, by devoutly partaking of the holy Sacraments, and by his zeal in the exercise of virtue. During his short illness he frequently invoked the aid of the Blessed Virgin, whom he always called his dearest mother. At length, uttering the holy names of Jesus and Mary, he gave his immaculate soul into the hands of his Creator, in the year 1184, in the nineteenth year of his age. He was buried, as he had requested, in the little Chapel he had himself erected, in which he had passed so many hours in devout prayer.

On account of the many miracles that had taken place through his intercession, he was canonized by Pope Innocent IV., during the sojourn of the latter at Lyons. In the Bull of Canonization is especially mentioned that the building of the bridge at Avignon was a miracle from beginning to end, which it had pleased God to work through this holy boy. The grave of the Saint was opened in 1670, when his body was found in a perfect state of preservation, and a few years after it was placed in the Church of the Celestins.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Almighty God, who once chose a shepherd to slay the mighty giant Goliath, made use of a boy, only twelve years of age, to perform a work which the most renowned architects did not venture to undertake. This is a fact, which, if it excites no more admiration than the conquering of Goliath by the young David, is surely not deserving of less. How true are the words of St. Paul; "But the foolish things

of the world hath God chosen that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that he may confound the strong" (I. Cor. i.). The Almighty proved by the above related events what his omnipotence was able to do, even with a weak, despised instrument. And what may not that weak instrument, a mortal man, do, if God only gives him strength? Therefore, think nothing that God

demands of you, impossible. "Put thy trust in me," said Christ to St. Benedict, "and trouble not thyself about the rest." This was also said to you. God demands of you that you should keep his Commandments, shun sin, confess and do penance, and correct your evil habits. The devil presents this to you as something extremely difficult, perhaps even impossible. Do not lend an ear to him, but remember the teachings of Our Lord: "Trust in me, and trouble not thyself about the rest." But as St. Benedict, besides putting his trust in God, exerted himself to the uttermost to do the work which the Lord had commanded him, so must you likewise join your own efforts to the grace that God imparts to you, to do the work which is expected of you; otherwise, your trust in God is presumption, not real trust. David, young and feeble, put his whole confidence in the Lord. "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts!" said he to Goliath (I. Kings xvii.). But he also used the means which he considered necessary to overcome the giant. May you do the same; trust in God, but at the same time neglect nothing you are able to do.

II. St. Benedict led a pious and

innocent life while he tended his flock. Prayers were to him the means whereby he preserved his purity. During the time he directed the prodigious building of the bridge, it was by prayer that he obtained the divine assistance in so important a work. He secluded himself from others, in an isolated place, several times during the day, and afterwards in the Chapel he had erected, for the purpose of being alone with his God. If you desire to live a pious, innocent and Christian life, if you wish to progress with your work so as to obtain a happy result to your undertaking, pray frequently and fervently. For, bear in mind, that it is absolutely necessary to have divine assistance in order to keep the Commandments of the Lord, to shun sin, to confess with repentance, to correct evil habits, in one word, to neglect nothing which is required for your salvation. Prayer is the most effectual means to attain this end, this grace. Therefore, do not neglect it if it is your earnest desire to gain your eternal salvation. "It is impossible," says St. Chrysostom, "to lead a Christian life, or to have divine grace and assistance without praying frequently."

SIXTEENTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. ENGRATIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

God, who manifested His might to the world in St. Benedict, the shepherd-boy, as was related yesterday; was also pleased to proclaim in St. Engratia the wonderful strength He imparts to those who, by reason of their feebleness, are often weary and faint-hearted. Engratia, or Engratis, was a native of Portugal, and the

daughter of rich and aristocratic, but at the same time very pious parents, who early instructed her in all Christian virtues. As soon as she was old enough to comprehend the priceless value of chastity, she resolved to live and die a virgin. Her father, however, thought differently, and promised her hand to Count Roussillon, who was commander of the French troops on the frontier. Although Engratia had not the courage, to oppose her father's orders openly, she still remained firm in her resolution to preserve her virginity. Confiding in God, she ardently supplicated Him to bestow upon her strength to accomplish her design. Meanwhile, the preparations for her marriage were completed, and several of her noble relatives, as well as servants, selected who were to accompany the bride to France, where she was to meet her husband. The day of her departure was appointed and grew nearer and nearer: but neither then, nor when it arrived, and she left her home, did she abandon her trust in help from above. Her prayer, daily and hourly, was: "Lord, let me die a virgin." God lent a gracious ear to her supplications, and when on her voyage, she more than ever commended her virginity to Him, He revealed to her that she should not only die a virgin, but a martyr in the City of Saragossa. This revelation filled the heart of St. Engratia with heavenly joy, and she almost counted the hours until they reached that city. She longed to suffer for Christ and when at times, the fear that she might not be sufficiently strong to endure the tortures that awaited her, took possession of her mind, she raised her eyes to God, and in the confidence that He would aid her to suffer not only patiently, but joyfully, peace and comfort returned to her heart.

At that time there ruled in Saragossa, Dacian, an implacable enemy to the Christians, whom Diocletian and Maximilian, the two heathen emperors, had sent to Spain, with commands to uproot entirely the Christian religion. Dacian fulfilled to the letter the inhuman, the cruel mandate. He proceeded from city to city, ordering the Christians, without distinction of sex or age, to be most barbarously tortured and killed. All who refused to worship the idols must die. The number of the faithful who thus became martyrs is termed innumerable by historians, and is only known to God. As soon as Engratia arrived in Saragossa, she was informed how mercilessly the tyrant treated the Christians, and advised to leave the city quietly without loss of time, and so escape all danger. She, however, refused, and inflamed with the desire to die for the faith of Christ, she went with some of her companions to Dacian, and reproached him for his cruelty to those who adored the true, the only God. She

represented to him at the same time his blindness in worshipping idols, and exhorted him to abandon it if he valued his eternal happiness. Dacian was at first so utterly astounded at the fearlessness with which the young maiden addressed him, that he could scarcely utter a word. Having recovered his self-possession, he asked her who she was, whence she came, and who had given her authority to reproach him for his actions. "I am a Christian maiden," replied Engratia, "I am on my way to France from Portugal." More than this the tyrant did not permit her to say, but ordered her to be most barbarously whipped in his presence. The Christian heroine, however, continued even under the lash to proclaim herself a Christian, and Jesus Christ to be the true God. The tyrant, seeing that as yet he had effected nothing on the mind of the virgin, gave orders that she should be tied to the tail of a spirited horse, and thus be dragged through the streets of the city. When the virgin heard this dreadful sentence, horror and fear awakened in her heart; but only for one moment, for having called on God, it all vanished, leaving her composed and firm in her resolution. She was dragged through the street and her whole body bleeding and torn, filled every one with compassion. She, however, remained steadfast, and thanked and praised God, with a loud voice, that she had been deemed worthy to suffer for His name. The following day, by a new order from Dacian, they tied the virgin martyr to a pillar, and tore her body so long with hooks of iron that her entrails were visible. They then cut off her left breast, and scourged her so terribly that it seemed impossible that she could survive. And truly, nought but a miracle could have preserved the life of so delicate a maiden under such inhuman treatment. This, the tyrant, according to his custom, called witchcraft, and ordered her to be cast, thus torn and bleeding, into a dungeon, that she might slowly expire in her agony. Without doubt she suffered excruciating pains from her many and terrific wounds, and yet, according to Prudentius, a Christian poet, by far her greatest suffering was the longing to die for Christ. But this the tyrant soon ended, for when he saw that she lived longer than he had expected, and that she ceased not to praise and glorify Christ, he changed her death-sentence into one still more horrible. The executioner was ordered to drive a long nail into her forehead, and thus end her life with entirely unprecedented cruelty. All, who have written of her, bear testimony that she remained unwavering until her end in the avowal of her faith and in the praise of God. Thus she died, as she had desired, an immaculate virgin, and received at the same time the crown of martyrdom, in the year of our Lord 403. Her companions,

inspired by her example, also openly confessed Christ, and ended their lives by the sword, in order to accompany the Saint to her heavenly home, as they had anticipated going with her to her earthly one. The above-mentioned bishop Prudentius received the body of the saintly martyr, and interred it with all due honors. He also described her whole glorious martyrdom, and that of her companions, in verse; remarking among other things, that heavenly music had been heard at her burial.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "Lord! let me die a Virgin." surely a holy, but in our time, a very rarely uttered prayer. Almost the only thing a great many pray for is to make what is called a "good match" just as if it were impossible to be saved except in the state of marriage. This is why many marry blindly, and without serious consideration whether it is their vocation or not. Engratia's prayer was holy, and was answered in a truly wonderful manner, even at a time it would have been thought impossible that it could have been granted. God evinced in the above related occurrences His infinite power, which can come to our aid when we have abandoned all hope of help. This power he plainly manifested when Engratia's heart in its human weakness, was overcome by the fear of the tortures awaiting her. He not only took from her all apprehension, but imparted to her such endurance, such strength, as had rarely before been found in a delicate virgin. The omnipotence of God made of a feeble, timid, tender maiden, an invincible, dauntless Christian heroine. Let this be an example to you of what a weak man may endure when sustained by the power of the Almighty. But consider at the same time the means we should employ to make ourselves worthy of divine assistance. Engratia's only means

were her implicit trust in God, her frequent, fervent prayers. Make use of the same means in all your tribulations, your afflictions, your temptations, and you will not fail of experiencing their efficacy.

II. St. Engratia went fearlessly to the tyrant, reproaching him for his cruelty towards the Christians. But when she, by his order, had to suffer the most terrible martyrdom, she rejoiced and gave thanks to God that he deemed her worthy to suffer for His sake. Have you not sometimes an opportunity to exhort others, or to reproach them when they offend God by speaking disrespectfully of religion, by slander-ing their neighbours, by impure expressions, or in various other ways? Why do you listen silently to all this? You have not, like St. Engratia, either to fear the trials of martyrdom, or a painful death: and yet she called the tyrant to account for his want of humanity. Be careful that you do not make yourself a partaker of the sin of others by such silence. Fear not to speak when you think it proper to do so, and you can prevent God's Majesty from being offended. Heed it not, should your admonitions be received with derision and laughter. Bear it with patience for the love of Christ.

With regard to suffering, you have read how Engratia rejoiced in it, how she thanked and praised

God during the excruciating torment after which she had longed. That was truly "suffering like a Christian." What is your conduct under afflictions and trials? Although you may not be so strong-minded as Engratia, who desired to suffer, and while suffering rejoiced and gave thanks and praises to God, you ought, at least, patiently to accept from the hands of the Almighty the

cross he gives you and bear it uncomplainingly. The wise man in the holy scriptures exhorts you thus; "wait on God with patience: Join thyself to God and endure." Take all that shall be brought upon thee: and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience: For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation (Eccles. ii.).

SEVENTEENTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. JUSTINUS, MARTYR, AND ST. ANICETUS, POPE AND MARTYR.

St. Justinus, of whom the Roman Martyrology speaks with great praise on the 13th of this month, was born a heathen, in the Holy Land. He united to remarkable abilities an untiring diligence, and soon ranked high among the wise and learned. His favorite study was Philosophy, and he read with avidity the works of all the philosophers which he was able to obtain. In them he sought for truth, but he found it not. At length, he turned to the teachings of Plato, whose wisdom had been extolled to him as being beyond all others. In order that he might give more undisturbed attention to the pursuit of knowledge, he determined to shut himself out from the world and from all society with his fellow-beings. To this end he chose a residence out of the city, in a most beautiful region on the sea shore. There he spent the most of his time in reading the works of Plato and those of other philosophers. The mythology of the heathens was to him an idle tale, and he sought after the knowledge of the true God. One day (so he himself relatês), as he was deeply musing, a venerable old man stood suddenly before him, and said to him that what he was in search of could not be found either in the works of Plato or those of any other philosopher, but only in the Prophets and other books of the Christians.

Justinus, gladly receiving this information, immediately began to read the books indicated to him and thus soon came to the knowledge of the only God and of the true faith. Frequent conversations with Christians of whom he requested an explanation of the Christian doctrine, brought him, to his own great

satisfaction, still nearer to the true light. Pondering on the endurance and inflexibility of the Christians during the most dreadful tortures, he drew from it the following conclusions: "The God whom the Christians worship must be the true God, as no other bestows on His servants so much patience and perseverance as the Christians manifest. The faith they profess must be the true faith, and they must believe in another and a better life where they receive their reward, because they sacrifice so magnanimously, this life for the love of their God." These conclusions were according to reason, and Justinus no longer hesitated to avail himself of the light that he had received for his own salvation. He requested and received, to the great peace and comfort of his mind, holy baptism, and thenceforth edified every one by his pious conduct. The deep compassion he felt for all those who were outside the pale of the Christian Church impelled him to engage himself seriously in the work of their conversion, and he led many to the knowledge of the truth.

At that time reigned the Emperor Antoninus Pius, whose Governors persecuted the Christians so cruelly. They represented them to the otherwise well-disposed Emperor as a horde of magicians, necromancers, and evil doers, and pretended that their faith was composed of wicked doctrines most hurtful to the general welfare of the people, which made their destruction a duty.

Justinus, animated with zeal for the honor of God and his faith, wrote a very learned and unanswerable letter in defence of the Christian religion. In it he clearly proved that the vices with which they reproached the Christians were only wicked fabrications: that their doctrines were not merely according to reason, but were also full of truth, holiness and good-will towards men. This letter he presented to the Emperor, and it influenced him so much that the latter ordered that in future no Christian should be arraigned or executed on account of his faith. The whole Christian world rejoiced and gave thanks to the Almighty and to their brave defender, Justinus. After the death of Antoninus Pius, however, the persecution of the Christians began again, and a second letter which Justinus wrote in their defence had not the same effect as the former. Crescens Cynicus, a godless heathen philosopher, accused Justinus to the Governor Rusticus as a Christian, and caused the holy man, on account of his persevering in the true faith, to be executed, with several others, after they had been most cruelly tortured. St. Justinus thus sealed with his blood the faith which his pen had so ably defended.



St. Anicetus, the twelfth Pope after St. Peter, first saw the light of day in Syria, toward the end of the first century. He was carefully educated by his parents, and was gifted by God with great natural abilities, especially with a clear, penetrating mind. He made, by his untiring perseverance, such progress in all sciences that he was accounted among the best scholars of his time. In addition to this, the life he led was so blameless, that he was a model to every one of Christian perfection. The most shining of all his virtues was his truly apostolic zeal in protecting and disseminating the true faith. Therefore, when Pius I. had ended his life by a glorious martyrdom, Anicetus was unanimously elected his successor amid great rejoicing. And in truth, the Church needed at that period, a Pope as learned, zealous and holy as himself, as she was assailed and persecuted in all possible ways by divers heretics. Valentinus and Marcion, two Heresiarchs, had already commenced to sow the poison of their corruption in Rome, and even a wicked woman named Marcellina, who had adopted the teachings of Carpocrates, had already many followers. The saddest fact of all, however, was that the Catholics, themselves, became very indolent in the practice of their faith, and their conduct was not such as their religion required. This inspired the heretics with hope of being able to instill their spurious doctrines into their minds, as we know by experience that the surest road to apostasy from the true faith, is indifference and debased morals.

St. Anicetus, although he perceived all this with great pain, did not become disheartened. Calling on God for aid, he began earnestly to work. By daily sermons, by teaching and exhortation, he endeavored to move the Catholics to more fervency in their religion, as well as to a reformation of their lives. The example of his own holy life gave the greatest force to his words. He lived like a Saint, and all his thoughts were directed to lead his flock to salvation. He was an enemy to even the most innocent amusement, and found his only pleasure in prayer and in working for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. He employed the greater part of the night in devotional exercises, and during the day he was only found in Church, in the dwellings of the sick, or poor, or at home occupied in study or prayer. He chastised his body by fasting and other penances. To his enemies he was kind and charitable; to the poor, liberal; while in danger and persecution he was fearless and strong. This beautiful example of their shepherd was soon followed by the Catholics residing at Rome with such zeal, that, according to the testimony

of Hegesippus, the historian, the whole city became a habitation of sanctity. This change in the morals of the people was the most efficacious means of preserving them in the true faith, as the best safeguard of faith is a pious and blameless life.

As far as the heretics were concerned, who endeavored to implant in the hearts of the Romans the seeds of their false doctrines, the holy father had the greatest compassion on them on account of their lost souls. He left nothing untried to bring them to the knowledge of their error, but he thought it prudent to banish those who remained inflexible from the city. Polycarp, a disciple of St. John, came to Rome at the time of Anicetus, to discuss several points with him, which were to be settled for the welfare of the faithful. All was happily concluded and Polycarp paid the greatest honors to the holy Pope, everywhere praising his saintly conduct.

For eight years had Anicetus governed the Church with wonderful wisdom and power, when during the persecution of Marcus Aurelius he was seized, and being inflexible in the confession of his faith, he was decapitated.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Anicetus was an enemy of even innocent amusements. His entire occupation was prayer and working for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. The greater part of the night he employed in devotional exercises. During the day he was only to be found at Church, in the dwellings of the poor or sick, or at home occupied in study and prayer: hence only in places where the functions of his station called him. What have you to remark on all these points. Compare your life with the life of the Saint and blush with shame to find how little you resemble him in all these points. St. Anicetus refrained even from innocent amusements. Do you not frequently seek even such as are sinful? St. Anicetus occupied himself only with prayer and works for God and the salvation of souls. In what consists your occupation? How much time do you devote to prayer?

St. Anicetus spent the greater part of the night in prayer; you do not even pray during the day, much less do you do so at night? How have you passed many a night. Remember the time when the half, nay even the whole night was too short for your frivolous or perhaps sinful amusements. You did not find it hard then to cut short your hours of rest, but if you were told to employ one short hour during the night in prayer, you would think it impossible to overcome your sleep. Learn by this, how you not only deceived others but also yourself. St. Anicetus was only to be found at such places where the functions of his station called him. Where are you to be found during the day? Ah! very rarely at Church; seldom, if ever, where your station, your labors call you! where are you then? Ah! perhaps in a bar-room; at the gaming table; at a ball; in frivolous or

dissolute company! Will you ever be able to justify your conduct before God? Most assuredly not. Hence examine your conscience and reform where you have done wrong.

II. St. Anicetus had the deepest compassion for the heretics on account of their eternal destruction, therefore, he left nothing untried to bring them to the knowledge of their error. St. Justinus did the same by the heathens, and pitying their blindness, he endeavored to win them to the Christian faith. Both believed, what ought to be an article of faith with every true Catholic; namely, that there is no salvation out of the Catholic Church. There are, at the present time many who believe that there are three religions in which a man can be saved: yes even that every man can gain salvation through his own belief. They give the same hope to those who are not Catholics as they do to those who are. These false doctrines are worked out in hell to the destruction of many thousands of souls. The word of God clearly contradicts them, for it bears emphatic testimony that there is but "one Lord, one faith" (Ephes. iv.). That means, only one true God, only one true faith; hence only one true soul-saving Church. This only true faith is the Holy Roman Catholic Faith, for it alone was taught by Christ and the Apostles. This is proved not only by the blood of many thousand martyrs, but also by the verbal and written instructions of the holy Fathers and by many miracles of the Almighty. This faith is the first Christian faith and has no one but Christ for its founder. Out of the pale of this faith no Saint has risen during 1800 years. Thus, also, the Catholic is the only true Church, because Christ has built it with the assurance that: "The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (St.

Math. xvi.). Had she fallen into errors or superstition, as those pretend who live out of her pale, Christ would not have been true to his promise: He would have erred and would have deceived us. Only to think so would, however, be blasphemy. Hence the Church founded by Christ, as she had been, as even her enemies say, at the beginning of her existence, the true Church, must still be the same, and so continue until time shall be no more. If, therefore, the Catholic faith is the only true faith, and the Catholic Church the only true Church; it follows, undeniably, that there is no salvation possible out of the Catholic Church: hence, all those who do not die in the Catholic Church go to eternal perdition. "Without faith it is impossible to please God:" says St. Paul (Heb. ii.). He doubtless speaks of the true faith. Without it we cannot please God, hence we cannot be saved. It may please you or not; you may protest as much as you like; this remains true: Out of the Catholic Church, out of the Catholic faith, there is no salvation. Whoever, by his own free will dies out of the Catholic Church goes to eternal perdition. If you do not believe this infallible truth, you are no true Catholic; for you have no faith in the teachings which God imparts through His Church. Should you remain in this unbelief until your end, you will go to everlasting punishment with those who are not Catholics, because you also do not die in the faith.

In conclusion, consider well the words of St. Fulgentius: "Be certain beyond all doubt, that not only all heathens, but also all Jews, heretics and schismatics, who end their earthly existence out of the Catholic Church, go into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his legions. Be certain, beyond any

doubt that each heretic and schismatic, if he be not incorporated into the Catholic Church, cannot be saved, although he may give great alms, and even shed his blood for Christ's sake."

EIGHTEENTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. APOLLONIUS, MARTYR, AND ST. TURIBIUS, CONFESSOR.

After the death of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, during whose reign the Christians were continually persecuted, his son, Commodus, who succeeded him upon the throne, permitted the faithful to live in undisturbed repose. Their number, therefore, grew daily larger, and many of the richest citizens as well as of the nobility were to be counted among them. One of the latter was Apollonius, a Roman Senator, who, on account of his talents, eloquence and knowledge, stood in great esteem. The reading of the holy Scriptures and other Catholic books, as well as his attendance at the Christian teachings, and also his frequent conversations with Pope Eleutherius, so enlightened him, that he acknowledged the errors of paganism and embraced the Christian faith. After he had been baptized he became so zealous in the practice of all Christian virtues, that he was soon held up as a model to others. Besides this he most warmly defended the Christians against their enemies. The conversion of a man of so much consideration, and his holy life, caused many to follow his example, and Apollonius never neglected an occasion to exhort his former companions in Paganism to adopt the teachings of the true Church. How powerful, how convincing these exhortations must have been, was clearly proved by the numbers that were daily baptized.

The evil one, unable to endure this growth of Christianity, influenced a soldier, named Severus, to accuse Apollonius, before the Prefect Perennius, as a Christian. Although he had to lose his life by an order of the Emperor that they who denounced a Christian should suffer capital punishment; yet neither was Apollonius free because of a law which permitted no one accused of Christianity to be set at liberty until he had renounced that Faith. Perennius, therefore, endeavored to persuade Apollonius to abandon the religion he had adopted, and thus preserve his high office, the general esteem, and his life. As, however, Apollonius refused to comply with this demand, Perennius

ordered him to appear before the Senate, of which he was a member, and there give an account of his faith. Nothing could have given greater joy to the zealous Saint. He forthwith wrote a most learned and argumentative speech, in which he not only exposed the errors of paganism, but also proved incontestably the truth and holiness of the Christian religion: refuting with profound learning and eloquence the falsity of the calumnies that had been scattered about concerning the doctrines of the true Church. With this speech he entered the Senate, and read it slowly and with such effect that all present, although bitter enemies of Christianity, knew nothing to object. But Perennius, fearing that the marked effect Apollonius had produced might be productive of evil consequences to himself, commanded him to renounce the Christian faith at least for a short time, and thus save his life and fortune, as otherwise he could not be set at liberty. Apollonius, however, nobly defying all danger, replied: "I am surprised that you, after hearing my discourse, dare speak to me of abandoning the Christian faith. I desire nothing so ardently," added he, "as to be permitted to give my life for my faith, and thus proclaim its truth not only with my lips, but with my blood."

After these words he exhorted not only the Prefect Perennius, but also all the Senators, to follow his example in renouncing paganism, and, by having their names added to those of the faithful, to walk in the path leading to heaven. This Christian intrepidity and constancy of the Saint, although awakening great admiration in the hearts of the assemblage, aroused their hostility, and he was condemned to die by the sword. Apollonius rejoiced when he heard this sentence, and again admonished all to join the Christian Church, if they would save their souls from perdition. He ended his life in the year 189, on the 18th day of April, and was the first Roman Senator who obtained the palm of martyrdom.



To this short sketch of the life of St. Apollonius, we will add a few words upon St. Turibius, who is recorded in the Roman martyrology, on the 18th of April. The virtues for which this Saint had been renowned since his youth, not less than his erudition, raised him to the See of Astorga, in Spain. The zeal which he evinced for the eternal welfare of his flock, and his tender pity for the poor, made him beloved by God and man. Desiring to visit the Holy Land, he went to Rome and thence to the places where Christ had lived and suffered. When, however, he returned to Spain, he found, to his inexpressible sorrow, the whole land

greatly changed. The cause of this was that a certain nobleman named Marcus, rich and eloquent, had been consecrated Bishop, and had endeavored to disseminate the heresy of the Priscillianists among the people. Turibius began immediately to refute these godless dogmas by preaching, and also wrote several works in defense of the Catholic Church. God blessed the endeavors of the holy man with many miracles and with punishing those who opposed and scorned him. But the seeds of the evil had already taken such deep roots in the minds of many, that the Saint, notwithstanding all his endeavors, could not succeed in tearing it entirely out of their hearts. He therefore requested the aid of Pope Leo I., who at that time occupied the chair of St. Peter. St. Leo, writing to him, praised his zeal and advised him to call a Council of Bishops, in order that the Priscilian heresy might be solemnly condemned. This advice was followed with the most happy results: the infamous doctrines were unanimously denounced as false and wicked, and the credulous people, who had been seduced by the heretics, were brought back into the pale of the true Church. The teachers of these wicked doctrines did not fail to defend themselves in books which they distributed among the Catholics to make them waiver in their faith. The Bishop, perceiving the damage that resulted from this, had all those books gathered and publicly burned, writing, meanwhile, himself several works in which he exposed the teachings of the heretics, and, while showing their fallacy, he explained and defended the doctrines of the Catholic religion. These works he distributed among Catholics and non-Catholics to strengthen the former in their faith, and to bring the latter to the knowledge of their error. Experience proved that these means were the most efficient the Saint could have used to exterminate heresy and protect the true Church. He had the joy to see that his whole flock, becoming convinced of the falsity of the heretical dogmas, practised with great zeal all that the true faith demands of its disciples. After having thus praiseworthy administered his functions for many years, he peacefully closed his eyes in the year 410 of the Christian era. He was honored by God both before and after his death with many miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Apollonius came to the knowledge of the true faith from reading the holy Scriptures, attending religious instruction and conversing with the Holy Pope. As soon as he had received baptism, he</p>	<p>aspired after Christian virtues and was unwearied in the practice of them. St. Turibius maintained that the reading of religious books was the most efficient means to exterminate heresy and to fortify the</p>
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Catholics in the true faith. To read religious books and frequently to listen devoutly to the word of God, are two glorious means not only to come to the knowledge of the Christian truth; but also to regulate our conduct and lead us to salvation. If you value your soul, let these two means be earnestly made use of.

But what have you to say for yourself in regard to the Christian virtues? You received many years ago holy baptism, but have you acquired one single Christian virtue during this long time? Or do you perhaps suppose that to gain heaven it is enough to have been baptized and to bear the name of a Christian? Oh! that is a dangerous error. Neither our Lord nor the Apostles have so taught. When Christ, upon the mountain, exhorted His disciples to baptize the people, he added, most seriously; "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (St. Matt. xxviii.)

At another time, when asked by a youth what he must do to gain life everlasting, He replied: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (St. Matt. xix.). St. Paul admonished the already baptized Ephesians, to be worthy of their calling, namely, to lead a Christian life. "Walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called" (Ephes. iv.). The same Apostle menaced the Galatians, who had been baptized, with hell, if they lived not in accordance with their faith, but gave themselves up to sin and vice. After having named many sins, he said: "They who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God" (Galat. v.). What is the meaning of all this except it be that neither baptism nor faith alone is enough to obtain life everlasting? We must also strive to remain constant in the performance of those

Christian virtues, which faith requires of us. Many thousands are in hell, who have been baptized, but who, not having led a Christian life, nor kept the commandments, nor exercised themselves in virtue, have gone to eternal perdition.

II. St. Apollonius from being a heathen becomes a Christian, and no menaces can prevail upon him to abandon his faith. Thousands of others have acted as this Saint. And why? Because they firmly believed that they could only be saved in the Catholic Church. The same belief induced St. Turibius to leave nothing undone to strengthen the Catholics in their faith and to convert the heretics. In the Catholic faith alone is salvation. This is an incontrovertible truth: hence, one must also believe that all those who do not die in the Catholic faith are lost for all eternity, be they heathens, Jews, or whatever else. Many look upon this declaration as false, or as doubtful. They say, "God is merciful, how can He damn so great a number of people! Many who are not Catholics, lead a pious life, have not committed great sins, are not addicted to vice, perform many good actions; how can God damn these people?" We answer that, if they really lead such lives and do not violate the natural law, though they were not baptized, God in His mercy will unite them to the Catholic Church by the baptism of desire, a grace the extent of which is known to God alone. Again, God is merciful, but He is also just. Such people are perhaps not addicted to many other vices, but the one vice of wilful heresy or irreligion is enough to lose life everlasting. St. Paul includes this vice among those which deprive man of the kingdom of heaven (Gal. v.). But we ought not to damn any one, they say. That is true; but we damn no one:

wilful infidelity and heresy damns all those of whom we speak. We say only what will happen to them if they remain in their false belief. "Can I then," do you ask me, "say in truth, that this or that non-Catholic is damned?" I answer No! because I am not certain he has died in heresy, and that he was himself guilty of his error. It may be that some, who are to all appearance not Catholics, yet in truth die as such: as, on the contrary, I also fear that many, apparently Catholics, die as heretics. You may, however, say rightly; if this man died not a Catholic, he loses eternal life, because it is an article of faith, that one who dies not a Catholic can not go into the kingdom of heaven. Write

these words deeply in your heart, and let not those who speak otherwise lead you astray, whosoever they may be, if you wish God still to look upon you as a Catholic. "Out of the Catholic Church," says St Augustine, "a man may possess every thing, except life everlasting. In the Catholic Church alone is salvation to be found." "Every one who is separated from the Catholic Church, notwithstanding his belief that he lives a righteous life, will on account of this one crime, namely, this separation from unity with Christ, be denied eternal life: but the wrath of the Most High will follow him." These words are well deserving of consideration.

NINETEENTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. WERNER, ST. RUDOLPH, AND ST. SIMON; BOYS MARTYRED BY
THE JEWS.

In the year 1287, some wicked Jews cruelly murdered an innocent boy named Werner. He was born in a village about a day's journey from Bacharach, of poor but pious parents. Having early lost his father, his mother married again; but her second husband, a bad man, treated the lad roughly and unkindly. Unable at length to bear this any longer, Werner left the house and went to Oberwessel, to support himself by his own labor. He worked wherever he could find employment, as well for Jews as for Christians, leading at the same time a quiet, edifying life. He attended mass regularly, and frequently partook, with great devotion, of the Holy Sacrament. One day, during Lent, he was told by some Jews to fill a deep vault in a cellar with earth. He performed the task with his usual diligence. On Maunday-Thurs- day he made his Easter confession and received the Holy Communion with great fervor. In the afternoon, the Jews called him again to his work. But scarcely had he set foot in the cellar, when several

of them suddenly attacking him, forced a leaden ball into his mouth and then tied something over it to prevent him from crying for help. They then tore off his clothes, bound his hands and feet together, and, to make his sufferings still more unendurable, they hung him to a pillar with his head downwards. After this they scourged him most barbarously, cut him with knives, and left him hanging thus for three days. A Christian woman who was in the house, discovered, to her great horror, the cruelty of the Jews, and notifying the judge of it, led him to the place where the unhappy boy was hanging, still alive. The Jews, greatly frightened, promised the judge a large sum of money if he would not expose the horrible deed, and the judge, blinded by the gold, was wicked enough to keep it secret. Having at length murdered the poor innocent boy, they took his body, during the night, in a boat, to bury it somewhere. They were all night on the river, but were unable to reach the place to which they wished to go. When the day began to break, they saw, not far from Bacharach, a cavity half covered with bushes and brambles. They hastily laid the body of the martyred boy in it, and then returned home. On the following night the guards of the castle saw a bright light at the place where Werner was buried, and on going to it at sunrise, they found the mutilated body. They immediately notified the authorities of it, who had the body removed to the city hall, where, after it had been washed, every one was horrified to see how inhumanly it had been treated. The name of the boy soon came to light, and also that he had been thus cruelly murdered on account of his being a Christian. Hence he was buried with high honors in the chapel of St. Cunibert, which stood upon a mountain near the parish church. From the holy body arose a fragrance which seemed to endow all present with new life, and the Almighty wrought so many miracles at the grave, on the infirm and sick, that the name of St. Werner became renowned and blessed far and near.



In the same year—1287—a similar event took place in the city of Berne. Several Jews deliberated how they could get possession of a Christian child in order to gratify their devilish thirst for his blood. At length one of them succeeded in enticing a tender, delicate boy named Rudolph into his house, without the knowledge of any one else. Soon after the bloodthirsty murderers met, and carrying the innocent child into the cellar, they cut him in different parts of his body so long and so brutally that, the whole of his blood being drained, he died. After

they had thus sated their rage on the innocent child, they perceived that their hands and clothes were stained with the blood; even the face of him who had allured the child into the house was covered with red stains. They commenced washing their hands, clothes and faces; but in spite of all their efforts, the bloody stains remained—an incontestable evidence of their inhumanity. The fear and dread of the murderers when they became convinced of this fact can hardly be conceived. Some of them were so filled with consternation by it, that instead of hiding themselves they ran into the street. Their appearance, of course, awakened suspicion, and they were all soon seized by the authorities. The body of the child being found in the cellar, the murderers confessed their crime, and were broken upon the wheel. The rest of the Jews were driven out of the city and none allowed to make their residence within its walls. The body of the murdered Rudolph was buried with great magnificence under the altar of the holy cross in the principal church of the city, and St. Rudolph, tortured and killed by the Jews on account of his faith, has, from that time been honored as a holy martyr. His grave became celebrated from the many miracles which there took place through the Saint's intercession.



To these two events I will add a third, which happened at Trent in the year 1475. A Christian child named Simon, hardly eighteen months old, was enticed away with a piece of money, by a Jew, from the house of his parents, where he was sitting on the doorsteps. He was taken to the house where the synagogue was, on the evening of Maunday-Thursday. That same night several Jews met in that house to give vent to their hatred towards Christ, by torturing an innocent, defenceless child. Rabbi Moses began. He gagged him to stifle his cries, then tore off his clothes, and tied his hands and feet together, in order to torment him undisturbed. Hardly had he taken these precautions, when one Jew, with a pair of pincers, tore a piece of flesh out of the harmless child's cheeks and thighs: another cut him in the head with a knife, and others pricked his hands and feet with needles and awls, until, finally, they circumcised him with a knife. The blood which flowed during this martyrdom, was gathered into a bowl. After circumcision the child raised its eyes towards heaven, and God received his spotless soul.

This cruelty, almost too horrible to relate, did not remain long a secret. The Jews having confessed it, after some torture, re-

ceived the just punishment of their wickedness. The holy body of Simon, magnificently arrayed, was buried with great pomp and solemnity. On the place where the murder was committed a chapel was built, and the Jews were forever banished from the city. At the grave of this holy child many that were sick found health through his intercession. The testimony of the Roman martyrology on the 24th of March is as follows: "At Trent, the suffering of the holy boy Simon, who was most cruelly murdered by the Jews, and afterwards graced by God with many miracles."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. From the three above related occurrences we are taught how wonderfully God sometimes reveals those actions that have been done in the deepest secrecy. He is able also to expose your hidden vices: and what would your feelings be if he really did so? What he, however, refrains from doing now, will take place on judgment day. It is an article of faith that all our good and evil deeds will on that day be brought to the knowledge of the whole world. "For we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ," says St. Paul (II. Cor. v.). The revealing of their good works will be a glory to the pious, and the revealing of their sins will not be a shame to them, as they have repented of them and done penance. But whose voice will be powerful enough to describe the shame which awaits the wicked, when their sins are made known to the whole world? "I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will show thy nakedness to the nations, and thy shame to kingdoms," says the Lord (Nahum iii.). How disgraced, how humiliated will you be before the whole world, when all those vices which you now so carefully conceal become known to every one! What shame will you feel before the eye of God, the saints, and even before those from whom hope has departed forever! If only all the inhab-

itants of the city or village in which you live, knew your secret vices, I am convinced that you would almost die for shame. What will then become of you on the judgment day in the presence of so many millions of people? If you wish to escape so dreadful a disgrace, do nothing now for which you will feel deeply humiliated on the last day. Are you, however, guilty of sin? Only one way is open to you—confess and do penance. If you are ashamed to open your heart to your confessor, hear what St. Augustine says: "It is better to humble one's self before one man than to be covered with shame on the last day before so many thousand people." Consider that your confessor will be one of those who will be present at the universal judgment, and be not ashamed to reveal now to him what he will become acquainted with to your still greater disgrace.

II. The Almighty has not only taken the souls of the three boys, Werner, Rudolph and Simon, to the eternal joys of heaven, but he also glorified their bodies in which they had so cruelly suffered for the sake of Christ, and he will glorify them still more, on the day of the resurrection. What will be the fate of your body? I will give you the answer in a few short words. If you use your body and its members to

the service of God ; if you bear patiently what your body has to suffer ; if you do not treat it too tenderly, but, after the teachings of the Gospel, mortify and punish it, it will rise, in the universal resurrection with indescribable glory, and be happy for all eternity with your soul. "It shall rise in glory," says St. Paul (I. Cor. xy.). If, however, you use your body and its members to offend God ; if you have no patience when it has to bear pain ; if you gratify its every wish, it will appear, at the resurrection, as the most horrible monster, and, together with your soul, suffer never-ending torments in hell. "Thou shalt have no resurrection unto life" (II. Mac.

vii.). said one of the seven Maccabees to the godless Antiochus. And I say the same to you : you have no hope of glory for your body at the great resurrection ; no reward awaits you ; no eternal crown, if you now use your body to offend the Most High. What is to be done ? Answer this question yourself from the above. Use not your body and its members to offend your Creator, but to serve Him. St. Paul commended this to the Romans in the following words : "For as you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity, so now yield your members to serve justice, unto sanctification" (Rom. vi.).

TWENTIETH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. AGNES, OF MONTE PULCIANO.

St. Agnes, who received her name from Monte Pulciano, her native place, was born in the year 1274. She manifested an inclination to pray before she was able to speak plainly. After she had been taught to say the Pater Noster and Ave Maria, she often isolated herself from those around her and kneeling down in a corner of the room, remained whole hours in silent prayer. The sight of a picture of the Saviour or His Virgin Mother filled her heart with intense delight. She had not yet reached her sixth year, when she already told her parents that her only earnest wish and desire was to enter a convent and that she never should change this resolution. This desire increased with each year of her life, and her parents, on account of their piety, did not oppose her wish to retire from the world, but placed her early in a Dominican convent.

Agnes, in her new home, soon became a model of religious sanctity. Her constant self-immolation, her devotion, her delight in prayer, her perfect obedience, and angelic meekness, astonished everybody. The most difficult work with which her obedience was tried was discharged by her with cheerful readiness. A certain abbess of great intelligence, who was ordered by the

Bishop to inspect several convents, said openly in regard to the virtuous conduct of Agnes, that she hoped Sister Agnes would not bring less honor to the religious state than St. Agnes has conferred upon the Church of Christ by her martyrdom. She was just sixteen years old when the religious, who had received a new foundation at Proceno, a small town in the county of Orvieto, desired her as abbess, as the reputation of her saintly life had reached their ears. As Pope Nicholas consented to their request, Agnes had to take charge of the convent. No sooner was she installed in her new office than she became more zealous than before in the practice of all virtues, "because, she said, a superior must be an example of sanctity to all those who are under her care." Her austerity to herself, and her humility, were extraordinary. Since she was fifteen years old she had always fasted on bread and water. The ground was her bed, a hard stone her pillow. She frequently scourged herself until the blood ran, and at length she increased her severities to such an extent, that her confessor ordered her to mitigate them, as her health was visibly suffering on account of them. She was so fervently devoted to prayer, that the time allotted to it seemed to her much too short. It was martyrdom to her to be called away from it or to be interrupted. She always prayed with the greatest fervor; she was never distracted by anything, because her heart and soul were so completely united with her God. One Sunday, she remained immovable, in heavenly contemplation, from five o'clock in the morning until the evening. When she was informed how far the day had advanced, she only deeply regretted that she had thus deprived herself of partaking of the blessed Sacrament. God, however, sent an angel to her who administered the Holy Communion and filled her heart with heavenly comfort and joy. Her modesty in all her expressions and deportment was truly angelic, and awakened involuntarily in others also the love of chastity. Never, since her childhood, had the slightest frivolty been seen either in her attire or conduct.

In her native place was a house of bad repute, and Agnes had several times expressed the desire to see it changed into a convent. God gave her the consolation to see it thus changed, and being placed in it, she there established such excellent spiritual order, that in the course of time this very convent was regarded as a school of virtue and perfection. She remained in it until she died. Weakened by sickness, austerities and pious labors, she longed to be admitted to the presence of her Saviour. Before her death, she suffered great pain, but was always cheerful and uncomplaining, and at last resigned her chaste soul, adorned with so many bright merits, into the hands of her

Creator, in the forty-third year of her age. Her last words to the religious sisters, who surrounded her dying bed, were: "My sisters! love one another; for love is the characteristic of the children of God."

Her death was first known in the city by the little children crying: "Agnes, the Saint, has gone to heaven." The place of her burial soon became celebrated from many miracles which were wrought there. God had honored her life with many miracles, and had also bestowed upon her other divine gifts. One of her religious had lost her sight from sickness, and her parents wished to take her home, that she might have more facilities to be cured. As, however, the sister was unwilling to leave her religious dwelling-place, she requested her holy superior to pray for her. No sooner had Agnes complied with her wish, than the sight of the blind was restored. At the place where St. Agnes bathed in accordance with the directions of her physician, a spring arose at her prayers, which not only quenched the thirst of the weary workman, but also restored to many sick their long lost health. The prayers of the Saint also brought back to life a child which had been drowned while bathing, and had been carried to her. At another time, in reply to her prayer, God changed some water into wine, of which latter some under her charge were in need.

More to be admired, however, than all this, was the conversion of a hardened sinner whom her prayers and exhortation led to the right path. For thirty years had this man been without confessing his misdeeds, and Agnes, while praying for him, saw the place in hell which was to be his place hereafter. She therefore exhorted him urgently until at last, shedding so many tears, he confessed his sins with deep repentance, and commenced a pious life. He continued in it with so much zeal, that when he died, Agnes saw his soul carried by an angel into heaven. Celestial beings often visited the Saint, and many a devout person saw how they accompanied her to the throne of the Almighty. Nothing, however, gave the Saint such sacred joy as the frequent appearance of the Virgin Mother, who once offered to her embrace the holy child, from whose neck she took a most precious cross. She received at another time from the Blessed Virgin, three precious stones; all three had the same weight, and the weight of all three was the same as that of one. These were given to her as a recompense for the fervent devotion with which she adored the Most Holy Trinity.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Agnes was from early youth devoted to prayer. She found her greatest delight in her devotions. To leave them or be interrupted in them was to her a martyrdom. She always prayed with great fervor, and allowed nothing to distract her. Oh! how promising a sign is it when a man loves prayer from his childhood, and when he of his own free will exercises himself frequently in it! But how ominous of evil is it when a man from his first years dislikes prayer, and has to be forced to it by menaces or severity! Still worse is it, however, when a man, who ought, as an instructed Christian, to comprehend the necessity of prayer, evinces no love for it; and when he engages in it without due reverence, is glad only when it is over, and that he has in some way complied with his duty. How can such a man, if he has sound sense, count on the divine assistance in the daily occurrences of his life, or in any danger that might menace his soul or body! If you desire the aid of the Almighty, you must love to pray. Set yourself a certain time for it, and perform it always with becoming reverence, never allowing any distraction to divert you. "Those who pray," says St. Augustine, "should behave as those who present a petition to a great man. They ought either to kneel and raise their hands, or prostrate themselves upon the ground." "While conversing with a great man or a dear friend," says St. Chrysostom, "you are respectfully attentive. And speaking to God, of whom you ask remission of your sins, you are sometimes indolent, and even when on your knees, your

thoughts are wandering about, either in the market or somewhere else." What profit can so irreverent, so inattentive a prayer bring to you? Perform it in future devoutly and with due attention.

II. The modesty of St. Agnes was truly angelic. Never, from her childhood had been seen in her attire, in her words or conduct, the least frivolity. The virtue of modesty makes us agreeable to God and men, edifies others and incites them to act rightly; just as immodesty makes us hated by God and men, and gives scandal to others. St. Paul frequently exhorted the Christians to practise this virtue as a characteristic of Christ and His disciples. It ought to be visible in speech, in looks, in gait, in sitting, in fact in all our outward conduct. "In all your actions and in your deportment," says St. Augustine, "let there be nothing that can give cause of scandal to another, or in any way displease him." To cast the eyes boldly here and there; to toss the head from one side to the other; to talk incessantly, or too much; to hold unchaste conversations; to raise the voice too high; to contend with others; to laugh immoderately or too often; to gesticulate to excess with hands and arms; to run without necessity, or drag yourself forward indolently; to have your garments improperly arranged, or not to be decently covered:—these are all so many things which are against Christian modesty. Avoid them, if you would be considered a good Christian, and guard yourself against all frivolity or indecency. The words that St. Bernard wrote to an eccle-

<p>siastic, every Christian ought to take to heart: "He shall conduct himself in every thing in such a manner, that he may edify those who</p>	<p>see him, and so that no one, who sees or hears him, can doubt that he is a religious or a Christian.</p>
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TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF APRIL.

ST. ANSELM, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

Anselm, the celebrated Archbishop of Canterbury, in England, was born in Piedmont in the year 1033. He was gifted by nature with brilliant talents and a large, comprehensive mind. When he was hardly fifteen years of age he was desirous of entering upon a religious life, but he was not admitted, as it was feared that it would provoke the wrath of his father and his noble relatives. This refusal was so deeply regretted by Anselm, that he fell into a grievous illness, which renewed his determination to enter a monastery. On his recovery, however, he forgot his resolution, and not only did he lose all inclination to enter the religious state, but he began to lead a much more worldly life than he had done previously. It was fortunate for him that, to a certain extent, he had lost his father's love and was treated by him rather harshly. Not being able to endure this, Anselm left home, hoping that his absence might restore to him his father's affection. He therefore proceeded to France, where he remained three years. Suddenly his desire to study, which had lain dormant in his mind so long, was reawakened, and hearing that the celebrated Doctor Lanfranc, his compatriot, instructed young men in sacred science, in an abbey not far distant, he went to him and begged to be admitted among the number of his disciples. Lanfranc consented, and Anselm made such rapid progress in his studies that he soon left all others behind him.

During this time, he renewed his zeal in the practice of piety and virtue, and also his determination to give his life entirely to the Almighty. In pursuance of it, he received the habit, at the age of twenty-seven, in the Abbey of St. Benedict, where he had studied; and after having passed through his novitiate he took his vows. How earnestly he strove after spiritual perfection is evident from the fact, that three years after he had taken the vows, he succeeded Lanfranc, his teacher, as Prior of the same abbey, the latter being called as Abbot to another monastery. Several, who had

been longer in the order than he, envied and persecuted him on account of his promotion, but the exquisite gentleness, patience and humility of Anselm soon won him all hearts, and changed envy and jealousy into love and respect. His holy life added much to their veneration. He fasted almost daily, and his body became fearfully emaciated. By his constant mortification he lost all relish for food. During the day, he instructed others in sacred science and in the mysteries of the faith. The greater part of the night he passed in prayer and meditation. He attended, before all his other affairs, to the sick, day and night, and wherever he was needed. He fed them, and lifted them in and out of their beds with his own hands. The most tender devotion he bore to our crucified Saviour, and often wept bitterly when he thought how our Redeemer, notwithstanding all His sufferings for us, is so frequently and so deeply offended. His aversion to sin was so intense, that he several times said that he would rather cast himself into hell, than commit a mortal sin. He shunned carefully the least thing that he thought was displeasing to God; because nothing is little which offends the Most High, and often from something which appears in itself of small importance, eternal happiness or damnation depends. He also was much devoted to the Blessed Virgin, and was one of the first who defended by the pen her Immaculate Conception. Besides this, he wrote many other works in praise of the Divine Mother, and endeavored to incite others to pay her due honors.

After the death of the Abbot, Anselm was unanimously elected as his successor, although he did what he could to prevent it. Invested with this new dignity, he changed not in the least his mode of life, unless he was more fervent than ever in all his devotional exercises. The fame of his sanctity and erudition spread abroad daily more and more, so that he was not only esteemed by the prelates of the Church, as well as by kings, but also by Pope Gregory VII., who, harassed on account of the sad condition of the Church at that period, recommended himself several times to the prayers of the Saint. Some business appertaining to his convent called Anselm to England, and as his name was already well known there, he was everywhere received with the greatest honor. While he was in England, Lanfranc, who after being instructor to Anselm, had become Abbot and then Archbishop of Canterbury, died; and the king, without hesitation, chose St. Anselm to be his successor, and although the Saint most earnestly declined, he was at last obliged to yield to the influences of the clergy. He shed many bitter tears during his consecration, but once installed in his new functions, he went zealously to work to change the depraved manners of

the people by preaching, writing instructive works and holding Councils.

Everything was going well, when the king himself caused great disturbances. He took forcible possession of a great deal of property belonging to the Church, and would not consent that, during the division which at that time existed in the Church, any one else but himself should be regarded as the head thereof. St. Anselm courageously protected the rights and liberties of the Church, and opposed, with manly independence, the wicked oppression and evil designs of the king. Hence the unscrupulous counsellors of the king persecuted him, banished his friends, deprived him of his revenues, and tormented him in manifold ways, thinking thus to intimidate him, and make him pliable to the king's wishes. But they were mistaken. The Saint remained inflexible, and was willing rather to die than in the least to swerve from his duty. Believing that the wrath of the king would be sooner appeased if another occupied his See, he went to Rome and humbly requested the Pope to release him from his Archbishopric. The Pope, however, refusing his request, endeavored to reconcile him with the king, and meanwhile made use of the knowledge and talents of the holy man in his warfare against the heretics and schismatics. After some time, Anselm went to Lyons, in France, to escape the honors which were tendered to him at Rome. While there, King William of England, who had so violently resented the Saint's protection of the rights of the Church, died an unhappy death. He was hunting, and the excitement was just at its height, when the fatal arrow of a French officer piercing his heart, sent him, without a moment for repentance, into eternity. Indescribably grieved was St. Anselm on hearing this news, and he said more than once, that he would willingly give his life, if with his blood he could save the soul of the unhappy monarch. Before the intelligence of the king's death had reached Lyons, Hugh, the holy Abbot of Cluny, said to St. Anselm: "King William stands accused before the judgment seat of the Most High, and is already judged and sentenced to the eternal fire."

On the death of King William, the crown fell to his son Henry, who, warned by the example of his father, endeavored to ameliorate matters. He abolished the intolerable investitures, was gracious and kind to all, would neither have anything to do with the property of the Church, nor lay hands on the income of the clergy. As he knew how great the consideration was that St. Anselm enjoyed among all right-minded people, he recalled him to England and received him very graciously. But this behavior was of short duration, and before long the Archbishop had again to make a

journey to Rome to seek protection for the rights of the Church, which Henry, like his father, commenced to violate. The Pope granted the Saint all he requested, all that justice demanded, but when the king heard of it, he forbade the Archbishop to return to his See. Anslem, therefore, repairing once more to Lyons, remained there sixteen months. While there he daily celebrated the Holy Mass, and offered many prayers and penances for the conversion of the king and the salvation of the whole land. Meanwhile all England wished for the return of her shepherd, and the king's sister rested not in her endeavors until her brother was appeased and allowed him to come back. After the holy man had returned to his See, he strove with all his energy to employ his few remaining years for the benefit of his flock. Thus he passed three peaceful years.

When he was no longer able to say Mass, he caused himself to be carried into the Church, that he might at least be present at the holy sacrifice, for which he had always evinced the deepest veneration. After having received the holy sacraments on Wednesday in Holy week, he requested to be laid, clad in a penitential robe, on the ground upon ashes, and while they read to him the Passion of our Lord, he peacefully expired, in the seventy-sixth year of his age. The many miracles which were wrought at his tomb caused the fame of his sanctity to be spread abroad through the whole of the Christian world.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Anslem had such a deep horror for sin that he used to say: "If I saw on one side, sin, and on the other, hell, and were compelled to choose between them, much rather would I cast myself sinless into hell, than commit the sin." He feared sin more than hell. Thus speak and judge those who know what sin is, and how great its wickedness. How do you speak and judge of sin? How great is your horror of it? Your conduct is your answer. You thoughtlessly commit one sin after another, perhaps to avert a slight injury, or a small temporal evil, or to gain some trifling advantage, or obtain some fleeting pleasure. Would you thus act, if you had a real horror of sin?

Surely not. But why have you no real horror of sin? The whole reason is, I believe, simply this: You do not comprehend its indescribable wickedness. If you understood it rightly you would despise it as much as Anslem and all other Saints have done. Pray, therefore, like the blind man in the Gospel, fervently to God: "Lord, that I may see" (Luke xviii.). Give me grace to come to the knowledge of the wickedness, the horror of sin. "The beginning of salvation is to know our sins and to weep over them:" writes St. Jerome.

II. St. Anslem abhorred not only mortal sins, but also venial sins: not only because they also offend the Majesty of God, but also, because

eternal happiness or misery often depends on what seems to be but trifling. From this, draw for to-day the following lesson. The damnation of a man often depends on what appears to be but a trifle ; as, for instance, when one commits a venial sin voluntarily, not immediately chasing away wicked thoughts, or omitting to do a good action. A man who does this may go on gradually, until he commits a great sin and goes to perdition. The damnation of many a man began with what he thought a trifle. St. Chrysostom is of opinion that the damnation of Cain and Saul began with small offenses. Cain sacrificed to God only things, of little value, and when he saw that the offering of Abel was more acceptable to God than his own, he became jealous, killed his brother, and ended in despair and damnation. Had his sacrifice been such as to please the Lord, the rest would not have followed ; he would not have committed the crime, and not have gone to hell. In the case of King Saul, an act of disobedience—apparently small—was the beginning of sins so great, that they ended in eternal

damnation ; as the above-mentioned holy teacher says. As the death of the body is often occasioned by the merest trifle, as, for instance, by drinking cold water when over-heated, or by a slight wound, so sometimes a small act is the first step to eternal destruction. The neglect of being present at a sermon seems to be a slight omission, but I have no doubt it was for many the beginning of their eternal damnation. If they had heard the sermon, they would have come to the knowledge of their iniquity, and might have done penance. Having neglected it, they remained in their sin and have lost heaven. The same may be said of other trifling things. What, however, is the result ? St. Chrysostom answers this question in the following manner : “Those who fall into the greatest sins, began with committing small ones. Therefore we must avoid not only great sins, but also those that are small, yes, shun whatever in the least leads to wrong, doing and never omitting, either by carelessness or idleness, the good we may be able to perform.”

TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF APRIL.

ST. OPPORTUNA, ABBESS; AND ST. FIRMATUS, CONFESSOR.

St. Opportuna was born of noble parents at Seez, in Normandy. She felt from her childhood no gratification in any of the honors or pleasures of the world, but only in prayers and visiting the Church. One day she heard in Church the words of the Gospel : “Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and follow me.” She determined to obey the admonition of the Lord, to leave everything and follow Christ. Returning home,

she knelt down before her parents and said: "I exhort you in the name of Christ, whose words I have just heard in Church, not to speak to me of an earthly bridegroom; for I have chosen Jesus Christ, the Son of the Virgin Mother. I will be wedded to no other spouse." She had many suitors for her hand, as she was not only of noble birth, but possessed great riches and uncommon beauty; but her answer was brief and never varied: "I have found Him for whom my soul has yearned. I will cleave to Him and nothing shall part us." To remain constant to this, her Divine Bridegroom, she went, with her parents' permission, into a Benedictine convent, and some pious people saw in a vision how an angel led her to it. Her guardian angel, who gave her many excellent instructions, was afterwards frequently seen beside her.

Having received the habit from the hands of her own brother Godegrand, who was Bishop of Seez, she endeavored to live in strict conformity with the regulations of the order, and to exercise herself constantly in humility and gentleness. She had deeply taken to heart the words of Christ: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." Her daily life gave admirable examples of this teaching. She was extremely austere with herself, never partaking of meat or wine; and on Wednesdays and Fridays, neither food nor drink. On Sundays, rye-bread and some fish was her only nourishment. Once on being asked her reason for so great a rigor, she replied: "Adam and Eve, by their gluttony, drove us out of Paradise: we must win entrance again by abstinence and fasting." From her youth she was tenderly devoted to the Divine Mother, and implored her assistance with childlike confidence in all emergencies. After the death of the Abbess of the convent in which Opportuna led so exemplary a life, all the religious chose her as successor. At first the humble Virgin refused persistently, but finally demanded three days and nights to ask God to enlighten her. These three days and nights she spent in prayer, and the same was done by the other nuns. At the expiration of this time, the sisters repeated their election, and Opportuna was obliged to consent. In regard to herself, she did not in the least alter her austerities, but she supplied, with thoughtful love, those under her care with everything that was needful or useful to them. She treated all with incomparable sweetness, gave wholesome instructions to them, and animated them to fervor and zeal in the service of the Most High. To assist the poor and sick was to her the greatest joy. Many a night she watched by the bedside of the sick, or in prayer in the choir. Never was she seen impatient, and a word of resentment was never heard to pass her lips.

Bishop Godegrand, her brother, meanwhile left for Rome and Jerusalem, to visit the holy places. He placed the care of his Church in the hands of his cousin Grodebert, whose conduct soon after Godegrand's departure began to prove him unworthy of the charge committed to him. Godegrand had not been gone long when Grodebert disseminated the report that he was dead, and caused himself to be elected bishop. When, however, Godegrand returned from his pilgrimage in perfect health, Grodebert feigned a willingness to resign the bishopric to him, and invited him to his palace. While on the way thither, however, he caused him to be assassinated. Opportuna was inexpressibly grieved when she heard of her brother's murder, but was comforted by a vision announcing to her that her brother had been received into heaven, as a martyr to the cause of justice. Opportuna began now to long for her heavenly home, and she fervently begged God to release her from her body, and by a happy death to take her to Himself.

The Almighty heard her prayer, and revealed to her the day of her death. She therefore gave to those in her charge the last admonitions, begged their pardon for any offences she might have given them, and with great devotion received the holy sacraments. During the last twelve days of her life she suffered much from a violent fever. One night her room was suddenly illumined with a radiant light and filled with divine fragrance. She saw descending from Heaven the two holy virgins and martyrs Cæcilia and Lucy, whom, together with the Blessed Mother, she had always greatly honored on account of their great and heroic love of chastity. St. Opportuna requested of them to know what the Holy Mother required of her. "The Virgin Mother," replied one of them, "awaits thy coming, that in heaven thou mayst be for ever united to her Son, whom thou hast so faithfully loved upon earth." After this comforting vision had disappeared, the evil one manifested himself to her in a most frightful form, trying to frighten her with his temptations. Calling loudly to those around her, she said: "Do you see Satan standing there? He wishes to frighten me. Pray with me and help me to drive him away." After this she turned to Satan, and said: "I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, that thou depart from me. Thou shalt not triumph over the handmaid of the Lord as thou hast triumphed over Eve." Upon this, Satan disappeared, and the holy virgin, comforted and full of patience, continued to endure her sufferings. At the end of the twelfth day, when those around her were praying, she suddenly cried out, "See! there comes the Blessed Virgin, my most beloved mother, to take me home. I will commend you to her." And

stretching out both arms, as if to embrace the Holy Mother who had appeared to her, she sank back and expired.



Not less happy was the death of St. William Firmatus, which took place in the year 1090, at Mantillie, in Normandy. This Saint was born at Tours, and was the son of wealthy parents. His natural gifts and great learning procured him a rich canonry. But not satisfied with it, he went for several years to the war, and afterwards studied medicine, in which science he acquired great fame. By many successful cures of people of high standing he amassed great wealth, and all his endeavors were bent towards attaining still more. The thought of it seemed to fill his entire mind, until God, by the following occurrence, suddenly turned his heart from temporal possessions to those which are everlasting.

One day, returning from Church, he went straightway to his money chest with the intention of delighting himself by looking at the wealth of gold and silver which it contained. Finding, however, the devil, in the form of a monkey, sitting on his coffer, he was horrified, and demanded to know what he was doing there. The devil replied, "I guard my money; I watch over my treasure." William, although he drove the evil one away, with the sign of the holy Cross, was yet so deeply impressed by his answer, that he forthwith determined no longer to strive after temporal, but eternal possessions, and to go into the desert in order to serve God alone. On making his mother acquainted with this design, she not only gave him her cheerful consent, but promised to accompany him. He then divided his riches among the poor, and went with his mother into a desert not far from Tours, where, during several years he led a holy life. After the death of his mother, he undertook with several other devoted Christians, a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Upon the journey, the following, among other miracles, took place. The pious pilgrims travelled through a vast, barren desert. The great heat made them faint with thirst, but as far as the eye could reach, no well nor rivulet was to be seen at which they might refresh themselves. St. William, pitying his languishing companions, uttered a short prayer, and then with his staff touched a rock, and immediately there gushed from it a stream of water, clear as crystal, which restored their failing strength.

At another time, it happened that they lost their way in a wilderness, and knew not whither to turn their steps. William called God to aid, and a guide was sent to him. A raven, that

he had fed while he had lived in his retreat, came flying through the air, and greeting the Saint with his cries, flew before them, thus leading them the right way, which inspired them all with grateful love to the Almighty.

Soon after this, God chose to give His faithful servant and his travelling companions an occasion to suffer for His sake. The barbarians, through whose country their journey led them, suddenly attacked them, treated them outrageously, and cast them into prison, either in the hope of extorting money from them, or out of innate hatred towards the Christians. How long they remained in the dungeon history does not relate, but it is well understood that they suffered hunger, thirst, and many other privations. When, at length, they were released from their captivity by Divine Providence, they most piously visited the holy places.

On William's return to France he sought for a retreat where he might serve God undisturbed and in silence, and he found it after some time, in Normandy, not far from the small town of Moritonia. There he made his dwelling, and began to lead a rigorous, penitential life. His occupation was praying, fasting, watching through the night, and singing the psalms of David, besides which he dedicated a certain portion of each day to some manual labor. He fasted much more austere than the Church commands. He esteemed fasting necessary not only for the sinner, but also for the just. The food he needed, God sent him in a most miraculous manner as well by men as by angels. He also bestowed upon him the gift of prophecy and miracles. He foretold to a certain very avaricious woman, that she would have to beg after the death of her husband, as a punishment for her inordinate love of money; but at the same time he consoled her by saying, that it would lead her to the attainment of everlasting riches. All happened as the holy man had predicted.

A woman of Tours begged him to pray for the release of her son, who had been seized and thrown into prison. The Saint told her to go home, and that her son would soon be reunited to her. Hardly had the woman reached her home, when her son, still fettered with chains, entered her room, telling her how miraculously he had been released by the prayers of St. William.

A boy, who intended to go to the Saint and ask alms, hid his bag which was already filled with bread, behind a hedge, to be more certain of receiving something. Having done this, he asked the Saint for a piece of bread. "My child," said St. William, "go first and eat the bread thou hast already collected, and when thou hast nothing more, come to me and I will answer thy request." The boy perceived that the Saint knew things that had been done in secret, and was deeply ashamed of his deceit.

The same happened to a youth who had been sent by a woman to carry some fish to the Saint. The youth had taken the best of these away, concealing them in a hollow tree: the others he brought to Saint William. "I will accept neither these fishes, nor those which thou hast concealed at the instigation of the Evil Spirit," said the Saint. "Go and return them to her who gave them to thee."

These and other similar occurrences, while they gave evidence of the gifts which God had bestowed upon His devoted servant, served also to spread his fame abroad in the surrounding country. During his lifetime, he was honored as a man through whose intercession God would grant many graces; but he became still more renowned after his death. As God had revealed to him the hour when he would leave the earth, he himself chose the spot where his grave was to be. He died as he had lived, calmly and peacefully. His holy body exhaled a refreshing fragrance, and his tomb was visited by numerous sick and distressed, who all received there the aid they required.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "Adam and Eve by their gluttony drove us out of Paradise, which we must seek to reënter by abstinence and fasting." In these words, St. Opportuna explained the reason of her rigorous fasting. It was her belief that abstinence and fasting were not only beneficial, but necessary to salvation. St. William had the same opinion when he said that fasting assisted the sinner and the just to obtain salvation. The same has always been believed and taught by the holy Fathers and teachers of the Church of Christ. For, they say, with St. Augustine, that Christ Himself has commanded fasting, and that the Church has only appointed certain days on which it was to be observed. If, therefore, fasting is commanded by God, it must be necessary to our salvation, as we cannot be saved unless we obey the commands of the Almighty.

Supposing, however, that God had not ordained it, it would be sufficient to know that the Church

instituted both abstinence and fasting at stated periods; and as God has commanded obedience to His Church, those who do not fulfil her commandments, are disobedient to the Almighty. And if we are not obedient to the Almighty, how can we go to heaven? Therefore St. Opportuna judged rightly when she maintained that abstinence and fasting are necessary for our salvation. Many people in our day judge and speak differently. They believe that they can safely find the road to heaven without abstinence and fasting. But who is right,—the world or the Saints? Whom do you believe? Whom will you follow? Answer these questions to yourself, and determine to follow those who lead you into the right path. Believe me, that if you were to ask one of those who consider fasting as not necessary, to point out one who secured his salvation whilst breaking the law of fasting and abstinence, they would find none. But you

will find, on the contrary, in this legend as in others, a great many Saints who had quite another idea of fasting, and exercised themselves diligently in it, and therefore with it and by it went to heaven. Hence judge for yourself, if you do not act wisely when you follow the example of the Saints.

St. Opportuna received especial graces from the Divine Mother, from the angels, and the holy virgins, as well during her life as in the hour of her death. And why? Because she lived a pure life and loved chastity above everything. The angels, because they are pure spirits, delight to associate with pure souls. The holy virgins in heaven love those who imitate their example upon earth. And the Divine Mother, as she is the most pure, loves espe-

cially those who lead a pure life, but detests those who are unchaste or impure, and who are not earnestly endeavoring to better their conduct. If you desire to obtain the love of the angels and holy virgins in heaven, and above all the mighty protection of the Mother of our Saviour during your life and in your last hour, endeavor to live purely and shun the least deviation from chastity either in thought, word or deed. Impress deeply in your inmost heart the beautiful words of St. John of Damascus: "Mary is a virgin and loves virgins. She is pure and loves purity.... She is an enemy of everything which is unchaste. Hence, when we endeavor to live pure and chaste, we shall obtain her favor."

TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF APRIL.

ST. GEORGE, MARTYR.

St. George, one of the most renowned martyrs of our church, whom the Greeks call the Great Martyr, was a native of Cappadocia, and the son of illustrious Christian parents. His courage and his uncommon bodily strength made him adopt the profession of a soldier. His undaunted bravery soon caused him to be advanced to the rank of commander in the army of the Emperor Diocletian, by whom he was greatly esteemed on account of his valor. The emperor was ignorant that St. George was a Christian, until the following occurrence took place. Diocletian, a bitter enemy of the Christians, one day assembled all his counselors, and announced to them that in order to preserve their religion he had determined to exterminate all the Christians in his dominions, but desired their opinion upon the subject. One after another, the counsellors approved and praised this plan of the emperor. George alone disapproved of it, and said boldly, that he could not understand by what

right they would exterminate the Christians, as their religion and teachings were full of wisdom, their commandments holy, and their conduct blameless. All present were astounded at this speech, and began to suspect that he himself was a Christian. They represented, therefore, to him on the one side, the favor of the emperor and the great consideration which he enjoyed, the riches and honors he already possessed, as well as the still greater that were in store for him; on the other hand, the disgrace in which he would be held by the emperor, the loss of all his riches and honors, as well as the cruel tortures that he would incur, perhaps even an ignominious death, in case he disagreed with the other counsellors, or if he was a Christian and did not abandon his faith. They added much concerning the greatness and power of their gods, the errors of the Christian faith, and even refrained not from attacking its Divine founder. All this, of course, was done to fill St. George with disgust toward the Christian religion, and to induce him to worship their idols. He listened during some time in silence; but when they spoke contemptuously of Christianity, and defamed the Son of God, he no longer kept silence, but with the magnanimity of a fearless spirit: "I am a Christian!" cried he; "I worship the only true God, whose service, neither fear of the anger of a mortal man, nor the loss of my earthly possessions, can cause me to abandon. I shall consider it my highest honor to be permitted to shed my blood in the defence of His holy Name. That you speak so irreverently of Christianity and its Founder is only to be ascribed to your ignorance. If you were better instructed you would speak differently." Then turning to the emperor he said, "Oh! how much would it redound to the advantage of your Majesty if you would worship with me the God of the Christians! The kingdom He would give you in the other world would be incomparably greater than that which you now possess."

It is impossible to describe the wrath of the emperor on hearing so unexpected a confession. He immediately ordered that the valiant confessor of Christ should be fettered with heavy chains and be thrown into a dark dungeon. The following day he was bound to a wheel which was set with sharply pointed irons, and was rolled up and down on it so long that his whole body seemed to be one great wound. During this dreadful torture, which the Christian hero cheerfully endured, appearing almost insensible to pain, a voice from heaven was distinctly heard, saying: "Fear not, for I am with thee; combat bravely." After the torture, St. George was dragged again into the dungeon, where he thanked God for the strength vouchsafed to him, admonished all Christians who came to see him to be constant in

their faith, and healed several sick persons by making the sign of the cross over them. The Almighty sent an angel to him who cured his wounds and exhorted him to remain faithful. When, the next morning, he was brought before the emperor, the latter ascribed the complete restoration of the Saint to witchcraft, and again tried to persuade him to the worship of the idols. The Saint desired to see the idols he was requested to adore. The emperor, thinking that his eloquence had prevailed over the constancy of the Saint, led him, accompanied by the empress, and followed by all the counsellors, into the temple of an idol. The Saint, after having looked around for one moment, placed himself before a statue of Apollo, and asked: "Is it thou who demanded of me the sacrifice which is due only to the true God of heaven and earth?" Having said this, he made the sign of the holy cross towards the image, when the devil, who was hidden in it, cried, with dreadful roaring: "No! no! I am no God. There is no other God than He whom thou dost worship." "How dare you then, remain in my presence?" said St. George; and hardly had the words passed his lips, when, amid a terrible howling and lamenting all the idols fell down from their altars and burst into a thousand pieces. The idolatrous priest beholding this, uttered loud cries demanding vengeance, and the emperor, foaming with rage, commanded them to torture the magician (thus he called St. George) in the most unheard-of manner.

It is the opinion of many that St. George was the first who fell a victim to the fury of Diocletian against the Christians, and that in order to frighten others he gave full sway to his cruelty in torturing the Saint. At last, however, convinced that he could effect nothing with the Saint, he ordered that the invincible follower of Christ should be decapitated. The Empress Alexandra was led to execution at the same time. She had secretly embraced Christianity some time before, but not until she was witness of the above-described scene in the temple, had she the courage to confess openly that she also adored the God of the Christians. Many others were converted at the same time, who afterwards sealed with their blood the truth of their faith.

While proceeding with a joyful heart to the place of execution, the empress prayed unceasingly, raising her eyes to heaven. Having arrived there, St. George knelt down, and after thanking God that he had been a Christian from his infancy and had been strengthened to remain so until his end, he prayed most fervently that the Almighty might have compassion on the heathens, that light might be given to them, and that they might all be brought to the knowledge of the true faith. After this he

fearlessly offered his head and received the death stroke from the hands of the executioner.

St. George is generally represented as delivering a maiden from a dragon, or slaying one of those animals in combat. This is intended to denote that he valiantly overcame the dragon of hell, which desired to devour the woman represented in the Apocalypse—the Christian Church, the virgin bride of Christ. Others maintain that the dragon represents heathendom, out of whose jaws St. George rescued the Empress Alexandra, who, incited by his intrepid confession, also declared her faith and received the crown of martyrdom. She was executed on the same day as the Saint.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The heathen counsellors of the emperor spoke much in derision of the Christian religion, endeavoring by this means to alienate St. George from it. He, however, heeded not their words, as he rightly judged that the devil speaks through the mouth of the wicked. He remained steadfast. That the heathens should have spoken derisively of the holy religion, can excite no astonishment. They knew no better. That in our day there are many who use a similar language, although they pretend to be Catholics, must necessarily cause great wonder. How many Catholics speak of the articles of faith, of the commandments and ceremonies of the Church like heretics! They scoff at confession, fasts, pilgrimages, and processions; they deride confessors, priests and religious, sometimes even worse than heretics. They even doubt certain articles of faith, but agree on many points with the heretics, to the great scandal of those who hear them. It may be that they do not mean all they say, and only wish to be regarded as great and learned men, who know everything better than the priests, or the Doctors of the Church, or even the holy Fathers.

But be they in earnest or not, they do great wrong and have to answer for the scandal they give. To scoff at religion is always wicked, is always to be condemned. In the hearts of such people the true faith is either already dead, or at least in great danger of being so. It was by his language that St. Peter, who renounced Christ, was known to be from Galilee; and thus by the language of such scoffers must we judge that they can no longer be counted as true Catholics. A true Catholic esteems his faith highly and speaks well of all that it contains. Now, pay attention, dear reader; if ever you hear any one speak against the Catholic faith, contradict him fearlessly, if you are able to do so. Should you, however, not be able, do not allow such godless speeches to mislead you. Do not believe them: the devil speaks through them as he did through the mouth of the heathens of whom I told you. Think of the instructions you have received, of the lessons which have been taught you in Sermons. You can never justify it before God, if you believe these God-forsaken people, or if you become doubtful in your faith through them, as God never intended that they should

instruct you. God gave you his Church, and her teachers are to be your instructors. To these you shall give ear, their words you shall believe. If you heed not this commandment, you cannot expect pity when you go to perdition. "Hearken not to your prophets—the false ones, For I have not sent them, saith the Lord : and they prophesy falsely : to drive you out that you may perish" (Jerem. xxvii. 10). Thus the Almighty, in remote times, admonished His people by the prophet Jeremias. Christ, our Lord, says : "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. vii. 1).

II. The heathen counsellors of the Emperor praised and approved of his wicked design to exterminate the Christians. This they did that they might not lose the Emperor's favor. But St. George openly denounces Diocletian's determination, preferring to lose his favor than that of the Almighty. Take care that you never praise, justify, nor approve of

what you know to be wrong or wicked. Do not decide in favor of those who say this or that is no sin when you know that it is. Take no pleasure in such opinions lest you share in the sins of others. "Woe to you that call evil good and good evil," says the Lord our God (Isa. v.). Say without hesitation what you believe to be true or false, and do not mind the displeasure of others. The grace of the Most High must be dearer to you than the favor of men. God, whom you offend when you call evil good, is much more to be feared than all mankind. Compare the advantage you can gain from men with what you may expect from God ; and also the injury that man can do, with the punishment of an offended God. Compare these and then judge for yourself how to act. "Fear ye not them," says our Lord, "that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. x.).

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. FIDELIS, MARTYR.

St. Fidelis, who received in baptism the name of Mark, was born at Sigmaringen, or Simmeringen, in Suabia, in the year 1577. Although encompassed by temptations, he led a most blameless life from early youth, and preserved his innocence unspotted. He applied himself to study with such untiring energy that he soon ranked highest among his school mates. He studied philosophy at Freiburg in Brisgow, and took the degrees of Doctor of Law and Doctor of Divinity at Dilligen. He then commenced to serve his neighbors in the quality of counsellor. Being a man of great erudition, as well as con-

scientiousness, he brought all his suits to a fortunate conclusion. He never delayed them, rightly judging this would be a great wrong. This, however, provoked other advocates who were in the habit of protracting all proceedings at law, that they might derive more profit from them. One of these, therefore, went one day to him to remonstrate against his thus hastening with his processes, giving as a reason that what they gained was too little for their maintenance, much less allowing them to save something for their wives and children. Mark was horrified at so godless a request, and turning from the unscrupulous advocate, he raised his eyes to heaven and said with a deep sigh: "Oh! heavenly Father, how great is the wickedness of this world!" From that hour he resolved to change his profession, fearing that in the course of time he might adopt the principles of his colleagues. After mature reflection, he concluded to go into a Capuchin monastery, in which Order he had a brother whose life was happy and pious. On taking the habit, he received the name "Fidelis" which means "faithful." The master of novices, on the day of his investiture, made use of the words of the Apocalypse: "Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

These words the novice preserved carefully in his memory, and having written them on paper, he kept them constantly before his eyes. He began his novitiate with great zeal, in which he continued until the end. When others tried to induce him to moderate his zeal, he said: "Ah! do not prevent me from working in the vineyard of the Lord: because I have come so late. You entered it in the flower of your age, but I have given my first years to the vain world. Hence it is but right that I should endeavor to redeem as much as possible of the idle and dissipated time."

He in no degree relaxed in his fervor after he had taken the vows, but persevered in it, by prayers, meditation, and acts of self-mortification. After finishing the study of theology, he was appointed to preach, and his labors were crowned by many conversions among the heretics and other hardened sinners. At Feldkirch he nursed the soldiers of the imperial army, who were suffering from a contagious pestilence, with so much care and kindness, that even the heretics could not sufficiently praise his pious zeal. He endeavored, either by representing the joys of heaven, or by threatening with the divine punishment, to move sinners to repentance wherever he went: and it was seldom that his pious endeavors failed of their desired effect. One day he met an officer on horse-back whom he had never before seen. Pausing in his walk, he looked fixedly at him, and said: "My

friend, it is a long time that you have been addicted to cursing and blaspheming without trying in any way to change this evil habit. This is the last admonition that God gives you by my mouth. Either refrain, without loss of time, from blaspheming the Almighty, or divine punishment will overtake you. A sword will end your life, and you will go into eternity unprepared." The officer laughed at the prophet, but he soon experienced the truth of the prophecy: for in a duel he was pierced with a sword, and died without making a sign of repentance.

In 1622, St. Fidelis was sent as apostolic missionary, with nine others, into the district of Riess, not only to oppose heresy which was making the most fearful inroads there, but also to sustain the Catholics in their faith. He prepared himself for this great work by devotional exercises, saying before he left, that he knew he should not return, but be killed by the heretics. He began his mission at Riess on the Feast of the Epiphany. His sermons were fraught with apostolic zeal, and his life was so truly that of a follower of Christ, that even the enemies of the true faith were compelled to give him their highest esteem. The Almighty blessed the labors of his faithful servant, and he converted so many Huguenots and Calvinists, that the Protestants began to fear that their whole sect would be extinguished. They therefore came to the determination to make away with St. Fidelis. A Catholic, having heard of it, went to him and asked what he intended to do in case the heretics should suddenly attack and kill him. "I would do," replied the Saint, "what so many holy martyrs have done out of love to the Gospel and the Saviour. I should consider it the greatest grace God could bestow upon me." Not long after this, the holy man was invited by the Catholics at Sevis to preach. He accepted the invitation, but as God had revealed to him the hour of his death, he made his confession before his departure, said Mass, and preached: exhorting all to fidelity in their faith. After this, he said to his companions: "I go to Sevis, to end my earthly career." The 24th of April he arrived there, and immediately entered the pulpit. Upon it he found written, in large letters, these words. "To-day you will preach your last sermon." He was not in the least frightened at this, but began his discourse with the words: "One God, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism." During the sermon a heretic cried aloud: "No further, presumptuous man," and levelling his musket, he fired it at him, without, however, doing him any harm. A terrible commotion ensued, weapons of all descriptions became visible, and the yells of the heretics drowned every thing else.

The Saint, fearing that it might come to a bloody conflict between Catholics and heretics in the Church, descended from

the pulpit, prayed for some time before the altar, and then fearlessly left the church by way of the sacristy. Scarcely, however, had he made a few steps, when twenty armed Huguenots attacked him, trampling him on the ground and menacing him with a most cruel death if he did not immediately renounce the Catholic faith. He unhesitatingly replied: "Dear friends, I came to you not to adopt a false faith, but to instruct you in the true one. Upon this they rushed upon the Saint, who called upon the holy names of Jesus and Mary, while one of the men clove his head by repeated strokes of his sword: Some stabbed his body, others beat him with wooden clubs which had iron spikes, and yet others with other weapons. In a word, they acted as their rage prompted them, paying no respect even to the dead body. "Look," cried they, "here is one who intended to convert us all into Papists and to extinguish our religion."

This glorious martyrdom occurred in 1622. In the last century, the faithful servant of God was canonized, and Benedict XIV. placed his name among those of the Martyrs. Numberless have been the miracles which God has wrought through the intercession of this great Saint.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Fidelis redoubled his zeal in the service of God as soon as he entered the religious state, because he remembered that he began to serve Him so late. It may be that you also have begun late to know and serve God. You must therefore double your zeal in His service and try to compensate for the time you have lost. Those laborers in the vineyard who only began at the eleventh hour, retrieved by their zeal what they had lost, and received the same reward as those who had worked longer. What, however, is to be done in case you have not yet begun to serve God? Nothing, except to repent of your error and begin to-day to change your conduct. Yes, even to-day: for, you know not how long you may have time to serve God and work out your salvation. "The night cometh," says Christ, "when no man can work" for his salvation (St. John ix.). When this

night shall come is unknown to us. Whoever considers that the question involves a whole eternity, will not delay one single hour. "Therefore, while we have time," says the apostle, "let us work good" (Galat. v.). You still have time, but how long this will last is unknown to all but God. May be it will soon be ended. Therefore, hesitate no longer, but begin to-day to serve the Lord your God with fervent zeal.

II. St. Fidelis impressed the meaning of his name and the admonition of the novice-master, or rather of the Holy Scriptures, deeply into his heart. "Remain faithful unto death." Therefore he remained faithful to God and to doing good until his end. How much you have promised to your God at your baptism! How much at frequent confessions! How much in sickness and in other circumstances! But have you been faithful? Have you

kept your promises, your so often repeated good intentions? Ah! be ashamed before your God at the thought of how you have acted towards Him. You despise a man who keeps not the promise he made to you. Has not the great God much more reason to be displeased with you—to despise you,—as you have scarcely kept one of the promises that you have so often and so solemnly made to Him? Entreat His pardon, without delay, for the offence

you have committed by your unfaithfulness. Endeavor in future to be more true to your promises and your good intentions, or, otherwise you cannot expect the crown of eternal life: because it is written; “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life” (Apoc. ii.). St. Bernard says, “To obtain salvation, a man must faithfully fulfil the good promises he has made.”

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. MARK, EVANGELIST.

Two Saints by the name of Mark, are mentioned in Holy Writ. The first is Mark the Evangelist, whose festival we celebrate to-day. The other is Mark, surnamed John, who assisted St. Paul and St. Barnabas in the promulgation of the Gospel. He of whom we speak here was by birth a Jew, of the tribe of Levi. Some say that he was one of the seventy disciples of Christ, but others, more authentic, say that he was converted on the day of Pentecost by the sermon of St. Peter, and was also baptized by this Apostle. Hence the latter, in his Epistle, calls him his son, because he was through him spiritually born again in holy baptism. For the same reason, St. Paul calls Onesimus his son, and wrote to the Corinthians that he had regenerated them through the Gospel.

After St. Mark had been baptized he manifested such zeal in his new faith, that St. Peter chose him as his travelling companion and interpreter. At Rome, whither he went with the apostle, he had the joy to see the effect of the preaching of the latter in the daily increasing number of the converted. When St. Peter was obliged to leave Rome for a time, he gave the newly converted Christians into the charge of Mark. As these most earnestly requested him to give them in writing all that they had heard, from him and St. Peter, of the Saviour's teaching and miracles, so that they might remember it better and conduct themselves more according to His divine precepts, St. Mark

wrote the Gospel which is still extant in the Church of Christ. St. Peter read it after his return and approving of it, sanctioned the reading of it in the assemblies of the faithful. St. Peter afterwards sent his companion into Egypt and other surrounding countries to preach the Gospel, which was done by the Saint with truly apostolic zeal. He went to each city and village, and was so successful in his teaching that not only thousands of idols were thrown from their altars, and numberless heathens adopted the true faith, but the newly converted also endeavored to lead most holy lives. This was the cause that Egypt, until then so addicted to idolatry, became the home of so many hermits and fervent servants of the Almighty. The newly converted were not content with merely discharging the duties which the Gospel enjoined, but observed most scrupulously all counsels given to them by the Evangelists. They divided their property among the poor; possessed nothing as their own; and were extremely temperate, as, after the example of their holy teacher, they abstained from meat and wine, and fasted almost daily. Numberless were those who preserved perpetual virginity. Christians as zealous as these filled the whole land, especially Alexandria, where Mark governed the Church which he had founded, for nineteen years. He had there encountered the most embittered heathens, who could not even endure to hear a Christian spoken of. And yet, notwithstanding this, Mark had increased the number of the faithful to such an extent, by his preaching, his holy life and by the many miracles he had performed on people, by the sign of the Cross, or by calling on the most holy name of Jesus, that the house in which the converts had always assembled to hear the words of Christ, could no longer contain them all, and several additional houses had to be selected.

The idolatrous priests, enraged at this wonderful progress of Christianity instigated the heathens against St. Mark, and endeavored to make away with him. The holy man, fearing that a general persecution of the faithful might ensue, which might lead many, for fear of death, to desert their faith, consecrated Anianus, who had been one of the early converts in Alexandria, and whom the Saint had well instructed in the faith, as bishop, and secretly left the city, to be absent for some time. After two years, which time he employed in visiting other churches, founded by him, he came back to Alexandria. Soon after his return, which could not be kept a secret long, the heathens held a celebration in honor of the idol Serapis, on which occasion many sacrifices were made to this false god. The idolatrous priests, whose rage against St. Mark his absence had not cooled, cried loudly that above all they should search for the Galilean—

thus they designated the Saint—and as the most bitter enemy of their gods, sacrifice him to Serapis. The people following these madmen, sought for St. Mark, and found him before the altar offering to God the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass. Binding a cord around his body, they threw him upon the ground, and thus dragged him out of the church and through the streets with such violence, that the whole way was stained with his blood, and his body cruelly mangled. At sunset, they threw him into a dark, damp dungeon. During the night, an angel appeared to him, who said: “Mark, servant of the Most High; thy name stands written in the book of life. Thy memory shall never die, and the archangels will receive thy soul into everlasting peace.” Scarcely had this comforting vision departed, when Christ, our Saviour, appeared to him in the same form in which he had lived when on earth, saying to him these divine words: “Mark! peace be with thee!” The joy of the Saint at this vision was inexpressible. He passed the whole night in prayers and praises to God. The following day at early dawn, the barbarous heathens again dragged him through the streets as they had done the day previous, until his soul went to God. During his martyrdom, he ceased not to praise the Almighty, to preach Christ, and to assure all that he considered it great happiness to die for the faith of the Saviour. His last words were those spoken by the Lord upon the Holy Cross: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” The heathens would have burned the Saint’s remains, but a sudden hailstorm drove them away, and this gave an opportunity to the Christians to take possession of them and bury them in a cave hewed out of a rock. After many years they were transported to Venice, where at this day they are preserved and held in high honor.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Mark, an Evangelist of Jesus Christ, abstained from meat and wine and fasted almost daily, besides leading the newly converted Christians to the same self-abnegation by his precept. Did St. Mark possess the divine spirit of the Saviour and His Gospel? Who can doubt it? Hence the spirit of Jesus Christ, the spirit of the Gospel, is a spirit of mortification; one that incites to self-immolation. Which spirit rules you when you not only detest self-mortification, but permit to your body all that it desires, though this is evidently against the laws of God and the Church? Why do you take such tender care of it and indulge it in all its caprices? Why will you not mortify it in any thing? The spirit of the Saviour has not thus taught you; and neither His spirit nor that of the Church? has hitherto been your guide. Lend him at least your ear, in future and do not permit to your body any sin-

ful pleasures. Deprive it rather, sometimes, even of some of those which are admissible. Punish it, after the example of the Saint, with voluntary penance. "We ought to treat our body," says St. Bernard; "like one who is sick. We refuse the sick many things which they desire, and which in themselves are not hurtful. In like manner we require of them much that they dislike." After this fashion treat your body. If you act differently, allowing it all it desires only to satisfy it; the words of St. Paul to the Roman will become true in your case: "For, if you live according to the flesh, you shall die" (Rom. viii.), namely, an unhappy, eternal death.

II. It was revealed to St. Mark, that his name was written in the book of life. Is your name also inscribed therein? I am not able to answer this question; but I am able to give you the hope that your name will be found there if you act according to the will of the Lord as laid down in His Gospel. In it Christ has shown the path which leads to Heaven. If you follow it you walk towards eternal happiness. He has clearly indicated what is needful to gain salvation, and if you fulfil his commandments, your name will surely be written in the book of life. Instead, therefore, of empty, impure, heretical books, take the Gospel of Christ in your hand, read

it carefully, examine yourself and then consider how you must regulate your life in accordance with it. For, it is not enough to confess one's self a Christian and to read the Gospel, but one must also live in accordance with its teachings. "Repent, and believe the Gospel:" said Christ in his first sermon to the people (Mark i.). But whoever truly believes the Gospel, not only believes what it contains, but follows its commandments. "How can a man say that he believes in Christ, when he obeys not His commandments," says St. Cyprian. And I say; how can a man say that he believes the Gospel, if he follows not its precepts, and does not regulate his life in accordance with them? There is no hope for him to believe that his name is recorded in the book of life, if he follows not the teachings of the Gospel. "But all do not obey the Gospel," writes St. Paul (Romans x.). And this is the reason why the names of so many are not inscribed in the book of life. "My sheep hear my voice," says Christ (St. John x.). The sheep that will one day be placed at the right hand of the Lord are the elect. They hear the voice of Christ and obey the calling. That voice sounds in the Gospel. Christ, the Lord, speaks through its words. Whoever wishes to be numbered with the elect must obey the Gospel. "My sheep hear my voice." Do you hear it?

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF APRIL

ST. ADALBERT, BISHOP AND MARTYR.

St. Adalbert, or Albert, the celebrated Bishop and martyr, was born in 956, and was the son of aristocratic parents, whose only idea was to bring him up to perpetuate their noble name. As, however, God sent him a severe sickness in his childhood, his parents sought refuge in the Divine Mother, and placing the child upon her altar, they promised to consecrate this, their only beloved son, to the service of God among the clergy, if the Blessed Virgin, by her intercession, would restore his health. The child recovered, and the parents, in the course of time, fulfilled their promise; for, after Adalbert had studied for nine years at Magdeburg, where he made great progress, he was, in accordance with the desire of his parents, ordained priest. At first, however, his conduct was not such as is proper for those who teach the Gospel. He loved and sought independence more than was suitable for his station, and was greatly attached to the vain pleasures of the world, in which he spent much of his time without deriving any profit. He aspired very little, if at all, after piety and virtue, and it was plainly to be perceived that God's watchful eye alone kept him from falling into great sins. An unforeseen occurrence brought him at length to the knowledge of his own failings, and opened to him the way to sanctity. The Bishop of Prague, whose conduct had not been exactly such as is suitable for a prelate of the Church, was suddenly taken dangerously sick. The contemplation of his past life made his last hours so full of horror to him, that he expired, crying in a terrible voice, "Ah! there come the devils to drag me into eternal damnation." Adalbert, who was present at this frightful scene, trembled violently and immediately resolved to abandon all worldly vanity, and in future to lead a religious life, that his end might not be so unhappy as that of the unfortunate Bishop. What he had determined on, he proceeded without loss of time to fulfil. He cleansed his conscience by a contrite general confession, did not devote again a single hour to empty pleasures; fled from the society of men, which he had too much enjoyed, became a lover of solitude, passed his time chiefly in prayer and spiritual reading; mortified his body by penances and gave fervent thanks to God that he had not been called

away in his sin. The clergy, who according to their duty, assembled to choose a successor, elected Adalbert to the vacant See; and although he opposed it long and earnestly, he had at length to obey the voice of God. Being consecrated Bishop, he exercised himself unweariedly in all those virtues, in which so many holy Bishops, whom he had taken as models, had excelled. He divided his time in such a manner that he had certain hours for Mass and for his devotional exercises, while the others were given to other duties of his station. His revenues he divided into four parts; the first he gave to assist the poor clergy; the second to the poor, the third to the ransom of prisoners; and the fourth to his own maintenance and that of his household. Towards the poor he evinced a compassionate and fatherly heart, and never sent one away without giving him something. Once, when a woman on the street asked alms, he told her to come the next day to his house, as he had no money with him. Hardly, however, had the woman gone a few steps, when he, repenting of his refusal, called her back and giving her his own garment, said; "Take this as alms, for who can say if I shall live until to-morrow."

The salvation of his flock was to him a source of great anxiety. He exhorted them zealously to choose the right path, preached daily, and did his utmost to make them lead a Christian life. Unhappily, the morals of all classes of people in the city were so depraved, that he found not only that all his labor and anxiety were useless, but also that he had to suffer manifold injuries and wrongs. As he saw no hope of changing them, he considered it best to leave his bishopric for some time. He went with a sorrowful heart to Rome, to visit the tombs of the Apostles, and to ask their intercession. From thence it was his intention to go to the Holy Land, but he first went to Mount Cassino to confer with the inhabitants of that monastery who were renowned for their virtues. These dissuaded him from his journey to the Holy Land; and Adalbert, following their advice, returned to Rome and entered the convent of St. Boniface, where, remaining two years, he continually exercised all those virtues which are necessary to religious perfection. Meanwhile his disobedient flock became aware that by their own misdeeds they had lost so good and so pious a shepherd, and desired his return. They sent, therefore, a deputation to him, most humbly requesting him to come back as they had earnestly resolved to be obedient to his words and instructions in future. Adalbert, at the request of the Pope, returned with the messenger, glad to fulfil the desire of his people, and ardently hoping that he might be instrumental in leading them in the way of salvation. They

received him with great rejoicings and with every sign of the most profound esteem, but when he exhorted them to change their sinful lives, they proved as before, deaf to all his zealous admonitions. The holy man left nothing untried to accomplish his object, but it was entirely useless. Leaving his bishopric for the second time, he went back to his monastery at Rome with the intention of remaining there.

Shortly afterwards, the emperor Otho came to Rome, and, among other requests, begged the Pope either to desire or order Bishop Adalbert to return once more to Bohemia, and try to gain some influence with the people and turn them from their wickedness. His Holiness informed the Saint, and seconded the Emperor's wish, but added that if he should find his presence in Bohemia ineffectual in correcting the habits of the people, he should turn his steps to another land, and there preach the Gospel of Christ. Adalbert was willing to do all that was required of him. While on the way to Bohemia, he visited his friend Boleslas, at that time reigning Duke of Poland, to confer with him about his once more returning to his See. Boleslas thought it expedient that Adalbert should first inquire, through some messenger, if the people were willing to receive and obey him as their Bishop. Adalbert followed this advice, and the messenger was received so ill that he returned without delay, and the Saint found it more prudent to retrace his steps. To fulfil the Pope's command, and carry the light of the Gospel into another land, he went to Hungary, and preaching the faith of Christ with indefatigable zeal, he converted many of the inhabitants, among others, the reigning Duke Geisa, of which event a circumstantial account is given in the life of St. Stephen, King of Hungary. After St. Adalbert had provided the newly converted with priests, he was called by Boleslas to dispel, by teaching the Christian faith, the darkness of heathendom which was still shrouding Prussia. Adalbert, desiring to give his life for Christ's sake, hesitated not to comply with the request, and accompanied by a few zealous friends, he preached in several cities of Poland with great success, and thus arrived at length in Prussia. Soon after his arrival, he began to preach to the pagans with apostolic zeal, and representing with fervent eloquence the falsity of the idols they worshipped, he exhorted them to embrace the true faith. But the ground was yet too rough and stony to receive the word of God so as to produce good fruit. The exasperated idolatrous priests would not allow the holy man to remain in the land, but drove him away with insults and abuses. On his departure, however, they ran after him, and dragging him back like a thief or a murderer, they took him to a high mountain and there decapitated him, giving vent to

their rage by throwing their swords and spears into the dead body. As soon as Boleslas was informed of this, he sent for the corpse of the holy martyr, but the barbarians asked as ransom for it as many pounds of silver as the body weighed. Boleslas consented to their demand and by a miracle of God, to the confusion of the avaricious heathen and the joy of the pious Boleslas, the body was found to be of very trifling weight. It was transported to Gnesen, a city of Poland, and was there buried with distinguished honors.

Among other memorable sayings of the Saint is the following: "It is an honorable thing to wear the mitre, the crosier and the ring, but in the account which we must render at the judgment day, it will be made manifest, how great is the responsibility which they involve."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Being witness of the unhappy death of a bishop, Adalbert determined to change his vain and unrestrained life, that his last hour might not be one of misery. The example of others made him wise, and actuated by the desire to die happily, he altered his conduct. Have you never heard of people who died unhappily—or perhaps been a witness of such a death? Why, then, does such an example not make you wiser, and why do you not begin to live more piously? You surely wish to die happy. Even the godless Balaam desired this, when he cried: "Let my soul die the death of the just and let my last end be like to them" (Num. xxiii.). This wish, however, was unavailing, because he continued in his wicked course. And just as unavailing will be your wish, if you do not change your life: for, to live with sinners and expect to die with the just, is not only presumptuous but against reason. Death generally harmonizes with life.

Those who live in sin, die in sin; but those who live piously and in the grace of the Lord will die in peace. It is surely a miracle of

God's great goodness when a man, who has lived in sin, dies happily and in the grace of the Lord. Do you, or rather, can you dare to expect such a miracle? "Be not deceived: God is not mocked;" writes St. Paul: "For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption: but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall have life everlasting" (Galat. vi.). Yes, truly, as we live, so we die. Whoever lives a godless life, will die unhappily, and must go to perdition. Whoever lives righteously, will die happily, and will enter eternal life. From this draw your own conclusion, how you will have to live if you wish to die in the grace of the Lord.

II. "Who knows if I shall live till to-morrow?" Thus spoke St. Adalbert, and therefore he would not defer giving his alms. Do you know, dear reader, if you will live till to-morrow? Most certainly you do not—and still less do you know if you will be alive after one, two, ten or twelve years shall have passed. The number of your days

and years is known only to the Almighty. Why, therefore, do you defer that which you know to be necessary for your salvation, from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, from year to year, perhaps, even, until you are very old, or lying on your death-bed? Why do you not do it to day? You know, for example, that you need a true penitent confession of your sins, as you have perhaps concealed many, or have gone often to confession without being penitent, or making good resolutions. Why do you defer this confession? It is necessary to your salvation that you restore what you unrighteously possess, that you reconcile yourself with your enemy, &c. Why

do you remain with this burden upon your conscience even until to-morrow, when you do not know if your life will be spared to you another day? "The day of to-morrow is certain, but who knows if you will see that day?" writes Thomas à Kempis. Listen to the exhortation of the Holy Ghost: "To day, if you hear his voice"—the voice of God—"harden not your hearts" (Psalm xciv.). To day: God wills not that you wait until to-morrow. "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day: for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee" (Eccl. v.).

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. ZITA, VIRGIN.

St. Zita, the most perfect model of a servant, was born in a village not far from Lucca, in Italy. She was brought up in the fear of the Lord by her poor but pious parents. When twelve years old, she entered the service of a noble family, called Fatinelli, whose house was near the Church of St. Frigidian. In the morning, before any one else had risen, she occupied herself in prayer; after this, she devoutly heard Mass, and then she began her work. During the 48 years that she served, she was never seen idle one quarter of an hour. She used to say that the best qualities of a servant were fear of the Lord, obedience, fidelity and love for work. All these qualities she possessed in an eminent degree. What was most to be admired in her was her cheerfulness when at work: she never manifested any peevishness, but obeyed her mistress without complaint even in the most irksome toil. Her leisure moments she occupied in prayer and reading devout books, and even during her work she inwardly said many a short prayer. She never frequented frivolous company, especially of the opposite sex, and was never

to be found at balls and other dangerous amusements. She said her prayers with such fervor, that she was often found with her eyes overflowing with tears, and sometimes in ecstasy. Her austerity towards herself caused her to wear a girdle of hair-cloth, which she tied so fast that it cut through her flesh, giving her extreme pain. The bed upon which she took a short rest at night, was either a hard board or the hard floor. She fasted continually, the whole year through, on bread and water. The food given to her, she divided, with the permission of her mistress, among the poor to whom she was extremely kind. The indigent also received the greater part of her wages, besides all she could obtain of her master and mistress.

God vouchsafed her many miracles, to show how he was pleased with the compassion which this Christian maid bore to the needy. A beggar once asked her for some wine: she had not a drop, but taking a pitcher, she went to the well to draw some water, which instantly changed into best wine. The corn in the granary, the flour in the barrels, of which her mistress sometimes allowed her to give to the poor, was often found miraculously increased. Once on Christmas Eve, she went to the Matins, and it being intensely cold, her master told her to take his furs. She wore them, but seeing a beggar in the Church shivering with the cold, she gave them to him with the understanding that he was to return them to her after Mass. But Mass was said, the people left the Church, and the beggar appeared not, and Zita was obliged to return home without the furs, and received a severe reprimand from her master. At noon, the beggar appeared on the door-step. Returning the furs with many humble thanks, he vanished before the eyes of Zita's master, leaving great peace in his heart, which caused him to appreciate still more highly the virtue of his pious servant.

At first Zita was obliged to suffer a great deal from her retirement and piety, at the hands of her fellow-servants. They laughed at her and mocked her as a simpleton, and by accusing her to her master and mistress of faults she had not committed, they often caused her to be harshly treated. She, however, bore everything with admirable patience, allowing nothing to disturb her in her pious exercises. She met her persecutors with so much gentle kindness, that she at last completely won their hearts, and this gave her an opportunity not only to restrain them from many vices, but to direct them to prayer, fidelity in their duty, listening to the word of God, and the frequent partaking of the Holy Sacraments. She was never seen angry, except when any one dared to speak an immodest word in her presence, as she respected and held in the highest esteem the

virtue of chastity. In the greatest heat of the summer, when her face was bathed in perspiration, she would not through sense of modesty, cool herself even by removing her neckkerchief. A presumptuous youth, who once tried to kiss her, she dealt with so effectually that he never afterwards offered her a similar offence.

Thus the holy Zita lived until she was sixty years of age, forty-eight of which she had passed in the same family, without ever complaining of her station in life or having ever been otherwise than cheerful, kind and gentle. Her master and mistress in consideration of the long and faithful services she had rendered to them, were willing that she should not work any more, but she preferred continuing her labors until her end, out of love to God. At length, she was called to receive her reward in heaven for her virtues on earth. A slight fever which God sent her was received by her as a forerunner of death, and she prepared herself for her journey by devoutly receiving the Holy Sacrament. Soon after, in the year of our Lord 1272, she expired joyfully while offering the most ardent prayers. In her last hour a wonderfully bright and shining star was seen for some time above the house where she was dying. The little children came running from all parts to this house, crying: "St. Zita is dead! let us hasten to see her." Her body was buried with marks of honor in the Church of St. Frigidian. It was found in a state of perfect preservation as late as the year 1580, and was deposited in a most magnificent shrine. The many miracles which have taken place through her intercession, have immortalized the name of this pious servant-girl. During her life, God honored her with many miracles, which at the time they occurred only few were acquainted with, but after her death they became universally known. Among these are the following: The pious virgin was in the habit of visiting, every Saturday, a Church dedicated to the Guardian Angel, situated six miles from Lucca. One day, on account of her work, she could not go until towards evening. As she walked along rather slowly, a man on horseback, going to the same Church, said derisively: "The conveyance you make use of will carry you rather late to the place whither you are going." "Ride as fast as you please, sir," replied the holy virgin. "Christ will not fail to bring me thither in time." The rider, spurring his horse, galloped away. Having reached Church he saw, to his great surprise, Zita already performing her prayers before the Church door. He asked how she had so quickly arrived there: "It was God's will," was her answer. On the evening before the feast of St. Mary Magdalene, she went to a church ten miles from Lucca where formerly a Mass was said

at night. Finding the Church door locked when she arrived, she knelt before it and was overtaken by sleep while praying. When she awoke, she saw that the candle that she had brought was burning and already half consumed, although she had not lighted it; and further that it was raining and the wind blowing to such a degree that no human power could have kept the light burning. Suddenly, the Church door opened of itself and offered her an entrance. At another time it happened that after the Matins, which were sung at midnight, she remained in Church until broad daylight. Remembering that she had to bake bread, she hastened home, where she found everything so far prepared, that she had only to put the loaves into the oven. As she supposed that her pious mistress, out of kindness to her had kneaded the dough and divided it into loaves, she went to her, to thank her and ask her pardon for having remained so long at Church. But neither her mistress nor any one else in the household had done the work, neither did they know who had performed it, which caused them to believe that the Guardian Angel, to whom Zita was much devoted had thus assisted her.

To these three occurrences I will add a fourth. It has been before related that St. Zita was, for a time, derided by her fellow-servants on account of her piety. More than once during this period, they sent her on an errand when the rain was pouring down in torrents, only for the pleasure of laughing at her when she returned with dripping garments. The pious servant always went without a murmur, but each time, to the wonder of all, she returned without a drop of rain upon her clothes, although she had left the house and returned without any protection against the storm. These and many other miracles are to be found in her life, and they give evidence how great the favor was which the Saint had found in the eyes of God.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Zita, the daughter of a poor peasant, becomes a Saint in a station of life which the world regards as low; because she lives piously according to her calling. May all learn from this that the cloister of a convent, and the solitude of the wilderness are not the only places where we can prepare for heaven: but that we can also save our souls in the midst of the world and become Saints even in the most

humble stations of life. It is only necessary that the station in which we live is respectable and that we are satisfied with the place God has allotted to us in this world. Not all can be lords and ladies, officers and merchants: there have to be also domestics, both servant-girls and men, peasants and laborers. God divides the stations as he knows that it is best for each one's salvation. If God has placed you in

a position which you cannot alter, try to be satisfied and quiet. Do not envy others: desire not that God had placed you in a different station; do not murmur nor complain, but endeavor to live piously where he has placed you. It is related of Ganfred, a pious monk of the monastery of St. Bernard, that he refused the bishopric of Dormick. After his death he appeared to one of his friends and said: "I am in heaven: had I, however, been among the number of the bishops, I should now be among the number of those cast into everlasting fire." I do not doubt that many who lived in an humble station of life, but who, having been pious, gained salvation, would say, if they were permitted to appear to us: "Had we been in a high position on earth, we should now be among the damned." Hence, let every one be content with his position; however humble it appears to be. It is easier to save one's soul in a lowly station of life than in an elevated one.

II. St. Zita allowed no immodest word to be spoken in her presence, was careful, even in the heat of summer, not in the least to expose her person, and bravely opposed the youth who dared to embrace her. These three examples are sufficient proofs of Zita's chastity and of her care to preserve herself pure. Whoever desires to live piously in his station and gain salvation, to him I say what our Saviour said to a certain lawyer: "Go, and do thou in like manner" (Luke x.).

Besides these two lessons, I will give, on the occasion of writing St. Zita's life, an especial instruction for all domestics. St. Zita is truly in all her actions, a perfect model of virtue and sanctity for them all. I should wish that they all had her example continually before them

and tried to follow it in every particular. Before all they should well consider the following points: St. Zita remained 48 years in one service, and went not on account of trivial circumstances from one place to another; she is satisfied with her station, does not complain of it, nor endeavor to free herself from it by an idle life or an imprudent marriage; she is honest, obedient to her mistress, always industrious and cheerful, never murmurs neither does she wish to be relieved of her labors, but continues in them until her death. She employs her leisure moments, not in idleness but in prayer and devotional reading; she is never found at places of vain, much less of dangerous amusements, such as dances, &c., she preserves her chastity carefully and bravely. She is full of compassion for the poor, but severe to herself and patient under persecution. No mockery, no derision, no false accusations can turn her from the pious path, in which she had determined to walk through life, &c. These are all points in which servants not only can but should imitate the holy virgin, if they wish to go to heaven.

St. Zita said that the most praiseworthy qualities of a servant are the fear of God, obedience, fidelity, and the love of work. Truly servants are bound in conscience to observe these points. They must fear God more even than their master, mistress or fellow-servants, and therefore they must never consent for the sake of pleasing either the former or the latter, to do any thing which may offend the Most High. They are, according to the fourth Commandment, obliged to honor their masters and to obey them in all that is not against the will of God. If they are not obedient, not respectful but slander, and injure the reputation of their masters; if

they are obstinate or sullen, or if they dare even to curse them, as is sometimes done ;—they commit great wrong and oftentimes, a mortal sin. Servants are in duty bound, to perform their work faithfully ; carefully to attend to the business entrusted to them and to promote the interest of their employers in the manner indicated to them, as for so doing they receive wages and board. If their master sustains any loss by their negligence ; if they are lazy at their work ; if they spend much time in idleness ; they commit great sin and, so to speak, steal their wages from their masters.

Servants are especially required to be strictly honest, but this duty is, unhappily, in our day, very little observed. They deceive their employers whenever an opportunity offers itself, they take whatsoever they can lay hands on, either money or other articles. Sometimes they take at once something valuable ; at others they go slowly to work, taking now and then a cent : they carry secretly the wine out of the cellar, the eatables out of the kitchen, and either enjoy them with their fellow servants or give them away. Some possess themselves of the corn in the granary, of clothes, linen, &c. while others assist their fellow servants in their dishonesty, or let it silently pass, instead of preventing it, or informing their masters. The worst, however, is, that the conscience of many is not in the least troubled by all this, and they neither think of changing their conduct, nor of returning what they have thus purloined. All who do these things ought to know, that they commit great sin in such dishonesty and that by it they may draw upon themselves eternal damnation ; for dishonesty is stealing, which is forbidden by the seventh commandment. They ought to know that,

like thieves, they are before God obliged to return what they have purloined or stolen. The excuses which they make, will have no more weight before God, than those of other thieves. Besides this, they make themselves upon earth despised and miserable. Honest servants are loved and esteemed : dishonest servants are despised and hated. What an honest servant earns by the sweat of his brow is blessed by God and will multiply in his hand ; but the gain of one who is dishonest is unstable, because the blessing of God is not upon it. Daily experience shows that with the wrongly acquired gain ; what is lawfully earned also is lost. Hence all servants who value their well-being here and hereafter should earnestly endeavor to avoid the slightest dishonesty. Whoever recollects that he has done wrong in this way ought to ask the advice of a confessor, that he may learn how to return what is not his own. This is of far greater consequence than is generally believed and there is reason to fear that many who neglect it, go to eternal destruction. May God grant that all servants, both men and women, and in fact all whom God has placed in a subordinate position, take this instruction to heart and regulate their conduct in accordance with it. They will be still more strengthened in their good resolutions by considering the words of St. Paul which he writes to his disciple Titus : “ Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters in all things pleasant, not gainsaying, not defrauding, but in all things showing good fidelity ” (Titus ii.). In these words are comprised the most important points of the above mentioned duties of a servant. Elsewhere, he writes : “ servants, be obedient to them that are your lords

according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ; not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with a good will serving as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Ephes. vi.). Consider first; that it is the duty of servants to serve respectfully, with sincerity and willingness, not forced, or only apparently. Secondly; that it is their duty to serve their masters out of love to God: that they ought even to serve and obey them as if they were serving and obeying Christ Himself. Who-

ever keeps this in view will never have any work which he will not perform willingly. For what would we not all do and suffer joyously for Christ's sake? What would we not all do willingly and joyfully, if the command came from Christ's own lips? And lastly, the Apostle shows that God Himself rewards a faithful pious servant. Many masters do not recognize the faithful service of their domestics; they do not recompense them justly, but even curtail their wages without sufficient reason. Is this done to you? My friend, despond not; for if you discharge your duties faithfully and for Christ's sake, God will one day richly reward you: He will recognize your services and will more than sufficiently recompense them.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. VITALIS, ST. THEODORA, AND ST. DIDYMUS, MARTYRS.

St. Vitalis, the father of St. Gervasius and St. Protasius, was a descendant of an old aristocratic family of Milan. When he arrived at manhood, he went into the army, and on several occasions evinced such heroism that he became a great favorite of the Governor Paulinus. The latter, a Pagan, was ignorant of the fact that Vitalis was a Christian, although he was often dissuaded by him from persecuting and torturing the Christians. One day, as Vitalis had accompanied the Governor to Ravenna, he heard that a Christian physician, named Ursicinus, who had suffered great tortures on account of his faith, began to waver in his constancy when brought face to face with death. Vitalis, without a moment's delay, went to the place of execution and so long and so earnestly encouraged Ursicinus, that the latter, repenting of his inconstancy, suffered death fearlessly for the sake of his Saviour. Paulinus, informed of this act of Vitalis, summoned him into his presence and asked him, as he had spoken so fearlessly to a Christian, whether he was not of the same faith? "Yes,"

answered Vitalis, "I am a Christian!" and speaking most earnestly to Paulinus, he endeavored to convince him of the error of paganism. The Governor, a bitter enemy of the Christians, having listened with great surprise and indignation, ordered Vitalis, who until then had been so great a favorite with him, to be cast into prison. The following day, he had him stretched upon the rack, and so cruelly torn with iron hooks, that the executioners themselves were horrified and refused to continue this dreadful torture. Vitalis, however, was not to be frightened, but unceasingly proclaimed Christ and exhorted Paulinus to embrace Christianity. Enraged more and more by this fidelity, the Governor commanded that an altar should be erected at the place where Ursicinus had been executed, and in case Vitalis hesitated one instant to sacrifice to the Gods, he should be there buried alive. The altar was built and the saint, on refusing to sacrifice to the idols, was thrown into a deep pit, where he was buried alive, in the year of our Lord 171.

The idolatrous priest who had incited the wrath of Paulinus against the martyr, and had invented that new method of torture, at the moment the latter was thus inhumanly treated, was possessed of the devil and cried with the most fearful accents: "O Vitalis, martyr of Christ, how you burn and torment me!" For seven days he endured this torment, when in despair he threw himself into the water and was drowned.



To-day is also the feast of St. Theodora, a virgin and martyr of Alexandria, and of St. Didymus.

Theodora had early in life chosen Christ as her Bridegroom and by a vow offered her virginity to him. One of the first men of the city asked her in marriage, but on meeting with a refusal, his love changed into hatred, and he himself denounced her to the Prefect Eustratius as a Christian. Having ordered her to be brought before him, he commanded her without hesitation to sacrifice to the idols, or otherwise he would send her into a house of prostitution. Theodora, determined neither to lose her faith nor her chastity, was appalled by the dreadful alternative, and raising her eyes to heaven she cried: "O God, Thou who didst miraculously protect the chastity of Susanna: Thou who didst keep unharmed the three youths in the midst of the flames: come also to my aid and guard me!" Whilst she thus prayed, she was seized and dragged forcibly into an infamous house. Scarcely was she there, when some profligate men came and wished to be admitted to her. A Christian soldier, however,

named Didymus, passed into the room before the others, and as the chaste virgin trembled at his approach, he said, "Fear not! I come not to harm, but to protect thee. Give me thy garments and take mine. Clothed in mine thou canst safely leave this place, and thus deliver thyself from the danger of losing thy chastity. I will remain here until thou art in safety." Theodora listened with surprise to this proposition, doubtful at first if she could trust the young man's words. As, however, Didymus most solemnly confirmed what he had said, she joyfully consented to his plan. Having exchanged garments, Theodora, dressed as a soldier, left the house and Didymus remained in her place. Not long afterwards a debauchee came with his evil designs, but Didymus made known to him that Theodora was there no longer, though he still wore her clothes. The occurrence was instantly reported to the Prefect Eustratius, who pronounced sentence that Didymus, instead of Theodora, should be taken to the place of execution and there be beheaded. No news could have been more agreeable to Didymus, who for a long time had desired to die for the faith of Christ. He went joyfully to the appointed place, to which also Theodora, having heard of it, hastened, being unwilling that he should die in her stead. "I," said she, "am willing and ready to die for Christ. I have not accepted you as one who was to suffer and die for me, but only as a protector of my chastity." But Didymus replied: "The sentence of my death is pronounced, and I shall die with gladness." Theodora would not desist, but brought many arguments to prove that not he, but she was to die: but Didymus was just as inflexible, and neither would be deprived by the other of the crown of martyrdom. The people listened with the greatest astonishment to this noble strife, which lasted until Eustratius, having been informed of it, gave orders that both should be beheaded. This sentence was executed, and thus both attained what each had so long and so ardently desired, the glorious crown of martyrdom. Theodora deemed herself doubly blessed as she was thus permitted to die a chaste virgin.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Vitalis admonished Ursicinus, who was on the way to become an apostate, to perseverance, and thus led him to heaven: he moreover endeavored to persuade the heathen prefect Paulinus to leave his idols for the true God and thus secure his eternal salvation. This</p>	<p>gained him the palm of martyrdom, the crown of everlasting glory. The idolatrous priest, however, who had not only provoked the prefect's wrath against St. Vitalis, but also incited him to a new manner of cruelty, thereby leading him to evil, became possessed of the devil, and terribly</p>
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tormented, he threw himself despairingly into the water and thereby lost his soul. Provoking to evil brought him to temporal and eternal destruction. You also may gain the crown of everlasting glory by admonishing others to do right and thus leading them to heaven, or by preventing them from doing evil and thus saving them from the danger of eternal condemnation.

If you have opportunity to do this, leave it not undone. "Deliver them that are led to death," admonishes the holy Ghost, "and those that are drawn to death forbear not to deliver. If you say: 'I have not strength enough: he that seeth unto the heart, he understandeth, and nothing deceiveth the Keeper of thy soul, and he shall render to a man according to his works' (Prov. xxiv.). 'If our Saviour,' writes St. Chrysostom, 'has suffered for our sake, why shall we then not do for our neighbor what He did for us, and saving him from the jaws of the devil, lead him back upon the path of virtue?' Be careful, however, lest like the idolatrous priest, you provoke others to evil, for if you are not like him punished on earth, you will surely be punished like him in the other world. If, however, you have been guilty of similar sins, repent of them most earnestly, do penance, and in future, strive to avoid them. Save those who by their vices and sins are drawn into eternal punishment. God will richly reward so noble a work of love and charity. 'For,' says the venerable Bede, 'it is a meritorious work and very agreeable to God, if one saves the mortal life of a neighbor: how much more so must it be, if we save an immortal soul which shall live and rejoice eternally in heaven.'

II. St. Didymus ventured his life and hastened to assist Theodora who was in danger and distress. St.

Theodora being in great peril of losing her purity, called upon God, and was wonderfully succoured. Cannot you, when you risk not your life by it, fly to the assistance of any one whom you see in danger of losing his salvation? Why do you hesitate? The greater the danger, the more ought you to hasten, that a soul, bought with the precious blood of Christ may not go to destruction. That soul will one day thank you in heaven. Are you, however, yourself in danger of sin, and thereby of losing your own salvation? Strive to fly from it, and if this is impossible, call with confidence on God and continue to resist bravely. He will aid you, He will succor you even if a miracle were necessary to accomplish it, the same God who kept the three companions of the prophet Daniel unharmed in the midst of the flames, will also protect you from being overcome in the hour of danger. Wo be to you, however, if you seek the danger, or remain voluntarily in it, without striving manfully against it. Should you flatter yourself that although in danger, you can yet keep free from sin, listen to the words of St. Cyprian: "Whosoever remains voluntarily near danger will not long be secure. Nobody when once entangled in the net of Satan can become free." And again: "It is a deceit and a delusion of the devil, if you imagine you are free from sin, while you are in danger of committing it." Just so, it is a deceit if you think that, under such circumstances, it is sufficient to call on God for aid, which He will most assuredly withhold from you. St. Augustine says rightly: "whoever, having the power, does not avoid the danger of sin, tempts God more than he trusts him." He tempts God, because he does not call on Him for aid in a proper manner, and without doing

what God requires of him. If you, therefore, wish to avoid committing great sin, and would save your soul, throw not yourself knowingly into danger of sin. Should you, however, find yourself in it, flee from it as quickly as possible. If you run into the danger of your own free will or remain in it by choice, it is evident that you love the danger. And what says Holy writ of this? "He

that loves danger, shall perish in it" (Eccles. iii.). Understand well what this means. It is not said, "He that *is* in danger," because many may be in danger against their wish. The words are: "He that *loves* danger:" which means, whoever by his own will runs into it or by choice remains in it, "he shall perish in it."

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. PETER, MARTYR.

St. Peter, upon whom God bestowed a truly apostolic zeal, was born at Verona in the year 1205. His parents were Manicheans, but he himself evinced from his earliest youth an aversion to the Arian and Manichean heresies, and would not be instructed in them nor even play with a child that was not a Catholic. His parents sent him to a Catholic school because there was no other in the city: and he soon learned not only reading and writing, but also the Articles of Faith. One day, when he was hardly seven years old, on coming from school he was met by a cousin, a Manichean who asked him what he had learned. The boy answered: "The Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God, the Father, Creator of heaven and earth." "That is wrong," said his blasphemous cousin. "The devil is the creator of the earth, not God." But Peter was not to be misled by such sacrilegious words: he repeated the first article of the Creed and added all the others undauntedly. The cousin, much vexed, hastened to Peter's father, informed him of it, and advised him not to send his son to a Catholic school. The father, however, attached so little importance to it, that he even sent Peter, afterwards, to Bologna to continue his studies. There he had the opportunity to read Catholic books, by which he profited to increase his knowledge and strengthen his Catholic faith. In this city he became acquainted with St. Dominic, the celebrated Founder of the Dominican Order, and begged him upon his knees to admit him into the newly founded community. His request was granted, and he aspired so zealously after spiritual perfection,

that in a short time he became an example of every virtue. Having finished his studies and being ordained priest, he was appointed to preach, and he discharged this function so successfully that he acquired through all Italy the name of an Apostle.

Meanwhile to increase the merits of his servant, God permitted him to be most shamefully calumniated. Peter was at Como in a monastery; and one day, when he was as usual absorbed in prayer, three holy virgins and martyrs appeared to him, whom he, on account of their chastity, especially loved and daily honored. These were St. Agnes, St. Catherine, and St. Cæcilia. While they spoke to him as human beings converse, a monk, who passed the cell, heard them, and going to the Superior, said that Peter had admitted women into his room; and that he had heard him conversing with them. The Prior who regarded this as the greatest scandal, called Peter before him and reproved him in the presence of others. Peter was too humble to reveal the grace which heaven had vouchsafed him, but falling on his knees, he said: "I am a sinner, and ready to receive my punishment." These words were taken as an acknowledgment of the truth of the brother's accusation, and he was banished to another Convent, where he was kept almost like a prisoner and neither allowed to preach nor to associate with any one. The innocent man complained not of this punishment, but bore it patiently, hoping that God would, in His own time, reveal his innocence. As, however, several months passed without bringing any change, he became almost faint-hearted, and one day, prostrating himself before a crucifix, he cried out in these words: "O, my Lord; is it unknown to Thee that I am innocent? Why hast Thou allowed me to suffer so long, and dost not reveal my innocence? Thou knowest that I have not deserved this punishment." Having thus spoken, he heard a voice which said to him: "And have I deserved to be nailed upon the cross? Let not your courage sink, but learn from me patiently to bear your cross, the heaviness of which cannot be compared to mine." Peter, on hearing this, blushed with shame, but his heart was at the same time filled with such comfort, that he no longer had any other wish than to suffer for Christ's sake. At length God brought the innocence of the Saint to light, and his brethern, highly esteeming the silence and patience with which he had borne the humiliation, sent him back to his convent, where, installed once more in his former functions, he continued preaching in divers cities and villages until his death. He converted many thousand sinners, and a still greater number of heretics. He convinced the latter in public disputations of their error, and thus led them to return to the true faith.

The devil, however, enraged at the loss of so many souls,

tempted the Saint day and night endeavoring to weaken his faith. Peter fought manfully with him, and as in every other tribulation went for refuge to the Divine Mother, humbly praying to be released from these temptations. Imploring her thus one day, he heard, proceeding from her image, the same words that Christ had spoken to St. Peter: "I have prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not, and that thou mayst strengthen thy brethren." From that same moment he was free from all temptations, and began anew to labor for the Church of Christ, to the great benefit of numberless souls. To this end God conferred on him the power to work miracles, to prophesy and to read the innermost thoughts of the heart. It would fill many pages to relate all the miracles he wrought, or all the prophecies he uttered. The heretics, in their wickedness, called him an impostor, and to make his frauds (as they termed them) better known, one of them, advised by the rest, pretended to be sick. Having called the Saint to him, he begged him to restore his health, and Peter, enlightened by the Almighty, said: "Jesus Christ, whose Gospel I preach, according to the Catholic faith, may restore your health if you are really suffering; if you, however, are intent on deceiving me, he will make you sick indeed." The wretch was immediately seized with a malignant fever, and suffering great pain, he confessed his wickedness and begged the Saint's forgiveness. The latter having compassion on him, cured him and converted him to the true faith.

When he had for many years administered his sacred functions as a preacher, God revealed to him that his end was near and that his death should be such as he had always desired: namely, that he should shed his blood for the sake of Christ. At Milan, he said, one day, in a sermon: "I know that the heretics have set large sums upon my life. They have already hired the assassin. Let them, however, know that they cannot bestow greater happiness upon me than by taking my life for the faith of Christ. To obtain this grace, I have daily prayed to the Almighty in the holy Mass for many years; but let them not think that my death will be of the slightest benefit to them." A fortnight later he travelled from Como to Milan. Two bandits, whom the heretics had hired, were lying in wait for him on the road, and when the first of them perceived him coming, he hastened from behind the bushes where he had been hiding and gave him several strokes upon the head with his sword. Sinking to the ground, the Saint dipped his finger into the blood streaming from his wounds and wrote upon the sand: "I believe in God the Father:" then lifting his eyes towards heaven, he said: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my soul:" and expired. The murderer left him after having stabbed him to the heart.

The body was brought with much solemnity to Milan, and buried in the Church of St. Eustorgius. The many miracles, which were wrought at his shrine, and still more, the holiness of his life, induced Pope Innocent IV. to canonize him. According to the testimony of the Roman Breviary, St. Peter kept soul and body undefiled from every stain of impurity, though he had been subjected to a thousand temptations and dangers. This alone says enough in praise of the Saint.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Peter, a Manichean, learned, in a Catholic School, the Catholic Creed and Articles of faith. He became more thoroughly acquainted with them afterwards by reading Catholic books which confirmed and strengthened him in the true faith. Many a Catholic child has unhappily learned heresy in schools not Catholic, and has remained perverted through his after-life. Many a Catholic has become at first unsteady and sceptical in his faith by reading heretical books, and in the course of time has even forsaken it, if not outwardly, at least in his heart. To all appearance, he belongs to the Church, but in his heart he adheres to the heretics and thus ceases to be a Catholic, though still bearing the name. To send children who are not Catholics to Catholic schools is right, and it would be well if it were more frequently done; as what they learn of the true faith falls deep into their hearts, and in time, brings forth the fruit of conversion. But to send Catholic children, without necessity, and without the consent of a prudent priest or confessor, to schools which are not Catholic, is an act which seldom fails to bring sin: for, what these children hear and learn of a faith which is not true, falls deeper into their hearts than all else taught them, and produces in the course of time the rotten fruit of apostasy from the

Catholic faith. Experience gives sufficient proofs of this. Wo to the parents who have occasioned this. Wo also to them who, against the laws of the true Church, read heretical books, out of curiosity or for other unfounded reasons. Besides the danger in which they thus wantonly place themselves, the mere reading of such forbidden books is enough to condemn them.

II. "And have I deserved to be nailed upon the cross?" said Christ to St. Peter, when the latter complained because he suffered innocently. Impress these words deeply in your mind, and remember them when your honor or your good name is assaulted, or when you have otherwise to suffer. How innocent soever you are, your Saviour was still more so, and yet what had he to undergo, what had he to suffer? Can you compare your sufferings to his? This thought should comfort and encourage you when you suffer innocently. Do you, however, suffer deservedly, or can you recollect wrongs for which you have not yet done penance? Oh then, dare not to utter a single word against the Almighty, but think and say to yourself: I have deserved it, yes I have even deserved more. "I will bear the wrath of the Lord;" said the pious Micheas, because I have sinned against Him" (Micheas, vii.). The remembrance of your sins will make all you have to suffer

easy to you. "When we think of the wrong we have done," says St. Gregory, "all adversities will appear as trifles, because we know that we have deserved much more. They ought rather to urge us to thank God than to complain against Him." What is written will always remain

true: "God does not punish us according to our sins" (Judith, vii.). He punishes us in this world much more mercifully than we deserve. How can we, therefore, reasonably complain of what we have to suffer?

THIRTIETH DAY OF APRIL.

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENNA, VIRGIN.

Sienna, in the Tuscan district, is the favored place where, in 1347, St. Catherine first saw the light of this world. Her life from her childhood, was a continual exercise of the choicest virtues, but at the same time, a perpetual communication of divine grace. When scarcely five years of age she was called "the little Saint" on account of her quietness and her love of prayer. Already at that time she greeted the Virgin Mother upon every step of the staircase with the words of the Angels: "Ave Maria!" When six years old, our Lord appeared to her with the Apostles Peter, Paul and John, together with St. Dominic, looked tenderly at her and gave His blessing. This was the beginning of many and extraordinary visions with which the holy virgin was graced until her death. Her heart from this time was filled with intense love of God. She read most carefully the lives of the Saints, and endeavored to follow their example. In her seventh year she consecrated her virginity to God. Her only pleasure was solitude, prayer, work and self-immolation. Persuaded by her sister, she once began to pay more attention to her dresses and to curl her hair after the prevailing fashion of the world. This lasted, however, only a short while, for she became aware during her prayers how much God was displeased with such vanities and how long her pious sister would have to suffer on account of it in purgatory: hence she refrained from it and repented of her folly as long as she lived. Her parents desired her to marry; but she replied: "I am already wedded to a most noble spouse and shall never bestow my love on a human being;" and cutting off her hair she covered her head with a veil. To drive all thoughts of entering a convent out of her mind, her parents burdened her with the entire care of the house, as well as the hardest work, so that no leisure was left her, either for prayer, or devotional reading. This was at first a sore trial

to her, but she was told by Christ to build a cell in her heart, where, in the midst of her employments she might pray, namely, by offering her work to God and by pious ejaculations. Following these directions of Christ, her soul became filled with sweet consolation, and she manifested, under the greatest drudgery, a most extraordinary happiness. This caused her parents to change their resolution, and they permitted her to live according to her vocation. Hence, she now began to live in a more retired manner, and with more austerity than before. Bread, herbs and water were her only nourishment, two bare boards her bed. She was girded by a pointed chain which she continued to wear until a few hours before her death, when at the instance of her confessor, she laid it aside. She only allowed herself one or two hours of sleep during the night; the remainder she employed in prayer or in the contemplation of the divine mysteries. She scourged herself three times daily, sometimes until she drew blood. These austerities she observed from her eighteenth year until her death. After she had been received into the third order of St. Dominic, she aspired most fervently after sanctification, but Satan endeavored with the most loathsome imaginings and temptations, to trouble the repose of her soul and pervert her thoughts; Catherine, however, increasing her penance and her prayers, withstood him bravely, but still without feeling more relieved or more quiet. At length, when, one day, Christ appeared to her, she said: "O Lord, why hast Thou forsaken me?" "I was in thy heart," answered the Saviour. "What;" said she, "hast Thou been in my heart which was filled with such abominable thoughts?" "Hast thou then consented to them? Hast thou been pleased with them?" asked Christ. "Oh, no!" replied Catherine, "it was most painful to me to be afflicted with them." "And this was thy merit," said Christ; "I have seen how thou hast battled, and I have assisted thee." Thus ended her temptations, which were succeeded by the most comforting visions of our Lord, His Blessed Mother and other Saints, the number of which is known only to God. She frequently saw Christ as a lovely little child in the holy Sacrament, for which divine mystery she entertained the most fervent devotion. She partook of it almost daily, but always with renewed piety and shedding a flood of tears. It was very remarkable that the receiving of it preserved also her temporal life, for it is a fact that one year she partook of nothing else but the Blessed Eucharist from Ash-Wednesday until Ascension-day. When she was required, as an act of obedience, to take some food, she suffered so greatly by so doing, that the request was not repeated. After some time, Christ commanded her to be kind and charitable to her neighbors, and she began to nurse the

sick with an indescribable loving care. Among others, she attended to two women, of whom one was afflicted with leprosy, the other with cancer. In nursing them she evinced the most perfect self-control. She pressed the offensive matter out of the sores and cleansed them with water. Feeling disgust, she drank the purulent matter which she had kept in a vessel mixed with water, saying to her confessor that she had never tasted anything more agreeable. Christ appeared to her on the following night, praised her self-mortification and rewarded her with great interior peace and tranquillity. It was hard for her to bear when this very woman, whom she had so tenderly nursed, instigated by Satan, not only complained of her, but slandered her in the whole city. But Christ visited her and presenting to her two crowns, one of gold, the other of thorns, said: "Which of these two do you desire?" Catherine answered: "Lord, I desire to resemble Thee in this life, and it is a joy to me to suffer as Thou didst:" and with these words she took the crown of thorns and pressed it upon her head. Christ, upon this, commanded her to continue her charity towards the sick, which she did with unprecedented patience and kindness. Her love towards those whose souls were diseased, was still more tender, and she offered for such her prayers and many penances, through which means she obtained from God the conversion of many sinners, who otherwise would have gone to destruction. She prayed three whole days for a certain woman who was dangerously sick, and who hated the Saint most bitterly. At last, she said to Christ: "I will not move from this place until Thou givest me this soul." He graciously complied with her request by converting the woman and giving her a happy death.

She was also gifted by God with the grace of reading the inmost thoughts of those who approached her: hence her exhortations were always addressed to their weakest spot. If a lascivious person came near her, she always perceived so terrible an odor that she had to cover her nose and mouth. Many other graces God had bestowed upon her, to relate all of which would take too much space. One of the most remarkable of these was, that Christ had impressed the marks of his five holy wounds upon her, but in such a manner that, exteriorly, nothing was to be seen, while she suffered all their pains. She had prayed to Christ for this grace in order that it might remain unknown to the world. The many miracles which she performed on the sick and possessed, and the heavenly wisdom with which she was filled, secured her not only the highest regard of the people, but also of the prelates of the Church, as well as of worldly princes. She was even sent in times of strife and contention, as a messenger of

peace, and the effect of her wonderful talents more than surpassed all expectations. At Rome, whither she had been called by the Pope, she became dangerously sick, and during four months she suffered excruciating pain: she ceased not, however, praising and giving thanks to God. The Almighty, whose judgment, though inscrutable, is always just, sent her a last bitter trial after she had received the holy Sacrament; Satan reproached her that in her actions and ecstasies, she had only sought her own aggrandizement. But she overcame the enemy of her peace, and after this anguish of soul, she had a most consoling and tender discourse with Christ, who visibly appeared to her, and into whose hands she breathed her chaste soul in the thirty-third year of her life. Her last words were: "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Catherine, during her whole life, repented of the folly she had committed in following her sister's advice, and vainly adorning her person. Oh! how much more reason to repent have many children of the world who by indecorously arraying themselves, not only give occasion for scandal, but often effect the ruin of others. With what bitter tears ought they to weep over the loss of so many precious hours they have so idly spent in adorning themselves! Catherine came to the knowledge that God is displeased with the vanity of dress. How much more, then, must He be displeased with indecorous and frivolous adornments, the only motive of which is to please the eyes of others. The sister of St. Catherine had much and long to suffer in the other world on account of her vanity; but how much more will those affected dolls of our day suffer in consequence of their levity! Catherine reformed as soon as she came to the knowledge of her fault. Pray to God that He may enlighten you, in case you have done wrong, in regard to this point: and ear-

nestly avoid a repetition of it in future. Be assured that simplicity, both in dress, manner and conduct is the most beautiful ornament of a Christian, as Tertullian writes. The frivolous, demoralizing way of dressing, the too great care for beauty, marks those persons who think little of the salvation of their souls, or who at least are more concerned for their mortal bodies. St. Chrysostom writes: "It is a sign that the mind addicted to vanity is already corrupt, or will soon become so." "If you dress yourself with immoderate vanity," says St. Cyprian, "to please others, do not say that your mind is chaste and pure: for your appearance convicts you of falsehood." "Your exterior ornaments are a sign of the abomination of your interior," says St. Bernard.

II. St. Catherine performed her work joyfully, and made it meritorious by frequent pious ejaculations. Against the temptations of Satan she combatted bravely, and bore, with patience and meekness, the heaviest calumnies and the bitterest pain. Learn from this, how to conduct yourself, under temptations

calumny and pain: and be ashamed of your past actions. "How is it possible," writes St. Bernard, "that we do not feel ashamed when we contemplate the splendid examples of the Saints, and compare with them our own way of living?" Impress deeply on your heart the words that Christ spoke to St. Catherine, in regard to her loathsome imaginations and temptations. To suffer such temptations is in itself no sin, how long soever they may last; only do not occasion them, and when you perceive them, call God to your aid to combat them valiantly from the beginning. If you are not released from them, which seldom happens, do not become disheartened. God will not forsake you: He watches your fight, will give you grace and strength, and prepare your reward in heaven. If you take this three-fold truth to heart, despondency will never overcome you in the hour of temptation. "God watches us when we fight," says St. Cyprian; "the Angels watch us: Christ watches us. What an honor, what a happiness to combat in the presence of the Most High, and to be crowned by Christ!" How God looks down upon those who battle, St. Augustine explains in these words: "God does not look upon them as a man watching those who combat; because such a man can cry, but cannot assist and impart strength, being only a human being, and not God. The Almighty, however, watching a combatant, helps and gives him strength if he has prayed for it."

III. St. Catherine was commanded by Christ to be kind and charitable to her neighbors. Have you read with what zeal she fulfilled the command? She nursed the

sick who were infected with the most loathsome diseases, with heroic self-abnegation. Yes, she did not even become less loving in her care when the sick person—the woman with the cancer—whom she had always nursed with the tenderest kindness, and whose offensive sores she had dressed with utter disregard to her own feelings, slandered and defamed her through the whole city, as a wicked woman, instigated by Satan. The salvation of her neighbors caused her great solicitude: in cases where her sweet mild persuasion effected nothing, she offered to the Almighty her prayers, her penances, to obtain the conversion of the hardened sinner. Christian reader, has not God our Lord given you also the command to be kind and charitable to your neighbor? Or can you obey Christ's command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," if you do not manifest it in works? Oh! how many opportunities are offered to you every day to do acts of kindness! The will only is wanting to improve these occasions, and thus to fulfil God's command. "I will not move from this place until thou hast given me this soul," said Catherine, after having prayed for three days for the conversion of a woman hardened in sin. How often have you prayed for sinners? What mortifications and penances have you offered for them?

Dear reader, follow in future the example of St. Catherine in these acts of charity and be assured that the souls which are thus saved by you will one day be your intercessors at the throne of the Almighty.

REMARK. To-day is the last day of the month. Consider the advice I gave you at the end of January.

FIRST DAY OF MAY.

ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES: APOSTLES.

St. Philip was born at Bethsaida, a city near the Sea of Genesareth. What we know concerning him is contained in the following words of the Gospel: One day, as Christ our Lord was going to Galilee, he met Philip and said to him: "Follow me." Philip unhesitatingly obeyed, and as, after a long conversation with Christ, he became convinced that He was the true, long-promised Messiah, he endeavored to lead others also to Him. Among the first of these was Nathaniel, an upright man and well versed in the law of God. After some time, Christ appointed Philip an Apostle, and he was extremely zealous in the fulfilment of his duties. Before the Saviour fed, with five loaves of bread, the five thousand men in the desert, he had asked Philip: "Where shall we buy bread that they may have to eat?" Philip replied: "Bread for two hundred pence is not sufficient to give each one a small piece." Christ, however, showed that He did not need so much to feed the assembled multitudes. After Christ had raised Lazarus from the dead, and had made His glorious entry into Jerusalem, some heathens came to Philip and said: "Sir, we would see Jesus." Philip informed the Apostle Andrew of it, and both acquainted the Saviour with the request. When Our Lord, in His exhortation after the last supper, spoke of His heavenly father, Philip said; "Lord, show us the Father, and it will suffice us." In addition to the above, tradition gives us the following of the life and labors of this Saint.

When, after having received the Holy Ghost, the Apostles dispersed into the world to preach the Gospel, Scythia, still wild and savage, fell to the lot of Philip, and by his preaching and the wonders he wrought, he converted almost all its inhabitants. Thence he went to Phrygia, where he found in the Capital, Hierapolis, an unusually large dragon, which the blind heathens worshipped as their God, and even cast as sacrifices living human beings before it, whom it tore in pieces and devoured. The Saint had deep compassion upon their blindness, and prayed to God upon bended knees, to destroy the monster by His power, that the people might recognize how wretched a God they had worshipped until now. What the Holy Apostle asked for he received. The dragon burst asunder in the presence of many heathens. The Saint, improving the opportunity, disclosed to the assembled multitude their error,

and preached to them the true faith, which many readily embraced. The idolatrous priests and some of the magistrates, much incensed at what had taken place with their pretended god, gave no respite to Philip, but immediately seized him, and threw him into a dungeon: then, after having most cruelly scourged him, they hung him upon a cross with orders to stone him to death. During his martyrdom, however, there was so terrible an earthquake, that all the heathens ran away in affright. The Christians wished to take the Saint from the cross, but he requested to be allowed to die upon it, after the example of his divine Master. His wish was complied with, and after he had most fervently recommended himself and the newly converted Christians to the care of the Almighty, he gave up the ghost.



The Apostle James, whose festival is also celebrated to-day, is called the Younger, or the Less, because he was the second of that name who became a follower of Christ. He was related to the Saviour, and therefore is sometimes called a brother of our Lord. His parents had consecrated him to God before his birth, and he therefore led, when grown up, that kind of life which was usual to a Nazarene. He abstained from meat and wine, cast off all sensual desires, and was so devoted to prayer, that the skin of his knees was hard, like the skin of a camel. Moreover, he lived so retired, and so blamelessly, that he obtained the surname of the "just." Christ received him among the number of His Apostles, and it is not to be doubted that he followed the Saviour everywhere, with the others, and shared with them in many of their graces. St. Peter ordained him Bishop of Jerusalem, after they had received the Holy Ghost. This difficult position he occupied during thirty years with unwearied diligence. His zeal in preaching the Gospel, and still more the holiness of his life, and the many wonders God wrought through him, placed him so high in the esteem even of the Jews that many, on meeting him, prostrated themselves before him and kissed the hem of his garment. The greatest comfort, however, that the Saint enjoyed was the conversion of so many persons to the faith of Christ. The number of the faithful increased daily, and also their piety as well as the purity of their life. The Saint insisted on the exercise of good works and avoidance of sin: the beautiful Epistle, which he wrote to the faithful, and which is contained in Holy Writ, is a proof of this. In it he exhorts them to avoid anger, pride, calumny, cursing and other sins, and to obey God and fulfil His commandments, to resist all

sensuality, to bridle the tongue, to be patient in suffering, steadfast in persecution, and above all things, kind towards others. The reason he gives for this, is, that faith without good deeds is not sufficient to lead to heaven. "What shall it profit, if a man say he has faith, but hath not works?—shall faith be able to save him? If faith have not works, it is dead in itself." Do you see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only? "For even as the body without the spirit is dead, so also, faith without works is dead." Thus writes the Holy Apostle, and with it refutes the dogma of the non-Catholics, who say that faith alone secures justification and salvation; while by the same words he gives a brilliant testimonial that the Catholic doctrine, which, to gain salvation, requires good works as well as faith, is the true Apostolic doctrine. It ought not to be passed in silence that this Apostle in the above epistle distinctly makes mention of, first, the Holy Sacrament of Extreme Unction which should be given to the sick. His own words I shall give somewhere else. Secondly, he speaks of the confession which one man should make to another; that is, to a priest. Both these show that Extreme Unction and Confession were already practised by the early Christians, and were not, as the non-Catholics wrongly and foolishly pretend, instituted or commanded by the Popes. Holy Writ' says also that St. James was present at the first Council which was held in Jerusalem, and that he was of the opinion of St. Peter, not to oblige the newly-converted Christians to observe the old Mosaic ceremonies.

Meanwhile, the Scribes and Pharisees noticing the daily growth of the Christian faith in Jerusalem and all Judea, and not knowing how to prevent it, determined to persuade St. James, by flatteries and promises, to renounce the teachings of Christ and go back to the old laws. Ananus, at that time High Priest, summoned him, therefore, to the grand Council. After he had praised his virtue and piety, he requested him to exhort the people, who, on account of the Passover, were assembled at Jerusalem in great numbers, to leave the new heresy and once more return to the right path. St. James promised to show them all publicly the true path to salvation. He was accordingly led upon the battlement of the Temple that his voice might be better heard by the assembled multitude. The Scribes, who were standing among them, called up to him: "Tell us, thou just man, what shall we think of the crucified Christ, because we will believe thy words. Show us the right path wherein we should walk." The Apostle, raising his voice, said: "Hear, my brethren, the proofs which I give of the truth.

The Crucified Jesus Christ is the Messiah whom our fathers so long hoped for, so long expected. He is the true Son of God who sits now on His right hand, until He shall return to judge the living and the dead. Whosoever believeth in Him cannot be lost." This and more the Saint fearlessly said in order to preach and defend the teaching of the Gospel. Many of those present applauded him and showed themselves ready to accept the teachings of Christ. The Pharisees, however, running hither and thither among the people, said: "Dear friends, this just man has erred; be not troubled. It is not as he says." At the same time some of them hastened upon the pinnacle of the Temple, whence the Saint had, with such undaunted courage, proclaimed his confession, and precipitated him to the ground. St. James, having raised himself upon his knees, lifted his eyes and hands to heaven, and in imitation of his divine Master, said: "Lord forgive them, for they know not what they do." The Jews, however, threw stones upon him, and one with a heavy club struck him on the head so that he sank dead upon the ground.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. As soon as Philip had come to the knowledge that Christ was the true Messiah, he endeavored to bring others to Him and make them also acquainted with His word. Have you, at any time during your life, brought any one to Christ, or to the knowledge of His word and to His love? Or, have you not on the contrary, led many a one to Satan and persuaded him to serve the Evil One. The first took place when you, by your good example or kind words, converted any one to the true faith, or moved him to repentance, or confession, or to hear holy Mass, and the word of God, or to have patience under adversity, or to any other Christian virtue. The second happened when you, by word or deed, enticed others to evil, or confirmed them in evil doing. If you have been guilty of the last, oh, repent, as long as you live, of the wickedness that you have caused,

and leave nothing untried to bring the soul, which you delivered to Satan, back to Christ. Should it, however, be too late, endeavor earnestly to lead other souls to Christ by your pious life, devout conversation, and fervent prayer. You can do nothing more pleasing to God, nothing of greater service to yourself and your neighbor. "If any of you err from the truth, and one convert him, he must know that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James vi.).

Thus speaks St. James. But what says the Eternal Truth of those who prevent others from the knowledge of Christ and try to strengthen them in their errors as did the Pharisees? "But woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you shut the kingdom of

heaven against men: for you yourselves do not enter in, and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter" (Matt. xxiii.). A still greater woe awaits those who lead others away from Christ and heaven, and bring them to Satan and hell.

II. St. James, in imitation of the Saviour, prayed even for his bitterest enemies. Shall the noble example of your Saviour make less impression upon you? Consider it well. Your Saviour prayed aloud upon the holy Cross for those who caused him infinitely more suffering than your enemies have caused you, and will you hesitate to pray for them? Shame on you! Cast at once all hesitation aside, and offer to-day all your prayers to God for those who have ever done you any harm. At the same time promise your Omniscient God that you will forgive all, without any exception, for any thing by which they have wronged you. This is one of the surest means to gain from God remission of your own sins. "If you desire that God would forgive you your sin, forgive your enemies," says St. Chrysostom. Christ our Lord says Himself: "For if you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences" (Matt. vi.). Comforting words! But terrible those which he adds: "But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences" (Matt. vi.). Now consider. You doubtless wish that God would forgive you, if you forgive others, but

He will not forgive you if you do not forgive others: hence you will have to forgive your enemies, or go into everlasting fire. Which is the easier of the two? What do you resolve to do? You daily say, in the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses." With these words you beg God to forgive your sins. But you add, following Christ's teaching: "As we forgive them that trespass against us," which means: as you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, so you wish God may forgive you your sins. Pay attention: if you do not forgive your enemy, you yourself ask that God may also not forgive you your sins, but condemn you to endless punishment; you yourself prevent the forgiveness of your sins, and with it, eternal happiness.

Should not your hair stand on end if you consider this rightly? "How can you," says St. Chrysostom, "raise your hands to heaven, and open your lips to ask forgiveness of your sins? Because if God were willing to pardon your offences, you prevent him from doing so, as long as you nourish bitter feeling towards your neighbor." And St. Anastasius says: "If you do not forgive the wrong done to you, you do not say a prayer for yourself, but draw the curse of God on your head when you say: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.'" You will now easily understand your duty on this point.

SECOND DAY OF MAY.

ST. ATHANASIUS, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA.

St. Athanasius, the great Doctor of the Church, and intrepid defender of the Catholic faith, was born at Alexandria, the Capital of Egypt, in the year of our Lord 294. His parents, who belonged to the nobility, were also God-fearing people, and Athanasius was gifted by the Almighty with such great talents, that when still very young in years, he had already made unusual progress in sacred as well as profane science. He was, however, not less assiduous in the practice of virtue and piety than he was in his studies. Desirous of leading a holy life he went to the hermit Anthony, and remained two years under him. He would probably never have left him, had not Alexander, the Patriarch of Alexandria, recalled him to the city, that he might aid him against the heretics, which he faithfully did. The Patriarch made St. Athanasius his companion to the celebrated Council of Nice, where, although he was at that time only deacon, he refuted the Arian heresy so thoroughly, that all present admired his skill and erudition. This, however, drew upon him the hatred of the Arians to such a degree, that until his death they regarded him as their worst enemy, and persecuted him in all possible ways. Shortly before the death of St. Alexander he left the city secretly, fearing that he might be chosen as his successor. The Patriarch, informed of this, said with prophetic inspiration: "Athanasius, Athanasius, you think to save yourself by flight; but it will not release you from the Patriarchal Chair." After the death of St. Alexander, neither the clergy nor the people would have any other patriarch than Athanasius. For six months they searched everywhere for him, and at length, when he was found, he yielded with many tears to the general wish. Experience showed that his election as Patriarch was really ordained by God for the welfare of the faithful. He proved himself a watchful shepherd over his flock, as well as a kind father to the poor. There was hardly a place in his large diocese which he did not visit yearly, and everywhere he frequently preached. In his own life he was very austere and kept a rigorous fast.

The Arians endeavored, at first, to prevent him from being raised to the dignity of Patriarch, and, not succeeding in this, they tried to make him hateful to the people, as well as to the Emperor, by the most horrible calumnies. The Emperor ordered Athanasius to defend himself against these accusations

in a Council which was held at Tyre. The greater part of the Bishops who were present at this Council were followers of Arius, and hence, bitter enemies of the Saint, nevertheless he appeared before them. The first witness against him was a disreputable woman, whose evidence had been bought with money. She, without even knowing the Saint by sight, said that he had taken lodgings in her house, and had done violence to her. Timotheus, a priest, who was on the side of Athanasius, pretended to be the Patriarch, and addressing the wicked woman, said, "What! have I taken lodgings at your house? Have I forced you to so gross a sin?" "Yes;" answered she; "you have done this," and confirmed her words with an oath. The whole assemblage, although mostly against the Saint, were obliged to acknowledge the falsity of the accusations and the innocence of Athanasius. The Arians, finding that this conspiracy did not succeed, soon found something else wherewith to charge him. They had some time previously spread abroad the rumor that Athanasius had killed a certain bishop, named Arsenius, and that he used the right hand of the dead man to practise witchcraft. They even showed a hand in a box, maintaining that it was the hand of Arsenius. The bishop himself, who was still alive, they kept hidden that the falsity of their accusation might not be discovered. But God brought it to pass that Arsenius, escaped from imprisonment and arrived at the house of St. Athanasius just as the latter was summoned before the Council. At the moment when he was accused of the murder of the bishop, he had Arsenius brought before the assemblage, and pointing to the two hands of the bishop, again overwhelmed his enemies with shame and confusion. The latter, becoming more and more enraged, prevailed at length upon the otherwise pious Emperor Constantine to banish the Saint to Trieste. After the Emperor's death, Constantine, his successor, recalled Athanasius, and sent him with a letter of safe conduct to his See. The Catholics received their holy Patriarch with great joy, which, however, did not last long, as the Arians had chosen a bishop of their own sect, who drove Athanasius, with arms in hand, out of the city. Proceeding to Rome he sought and found assistance from the Pope, who, after having tried the Saint in a special Council and found him innocent of the accusations against him, requested the Emperor to restore him again in his See. The request was granted, but the Arian heretics became so infuriated, that they once more drove St. Athanasius away. He then lived for five years concealed in a cistern, where his food was brought to him by an intimate friend. At the commencement of the reign of the Emperor Julian, he returned

to his flock for the third time. Hearing, however, that the Emperor, at the instigation of the heretics, had issued an order to take his life, he scarcely escaped, with some friends, on a vessel; but soon retracing his steps, he returned to the city, where he remained concealed until the Emperor's death. During the reign of the pious Emperor, Jovian, he appeared again in public and ruled his church with great zeal. After the death of Jovian, Valens, a protector of the Arians, came to the throne, when the latter, as a first favor, requested the Emperor to banish Athanasius from his See. He willingly acceded to their wish, but before the order could be executed, Athanasius had concealed himself in the tomb of his father. The Christians at Alexandria were at length unwilling to suffer any longer the absence of their shepherd, and began publicly to make complaints. The Emperor, fearing an insurrection, gave orders to search for Athanasius, and in future to leave him unmolested in his Church. The orders were carried out, and the holy patriarch, who had suffered so many persecutions, administered the affairs of his Episcopate peacefully until his death. St. Athanasius was in all his dangers and persecutions magnanimous and of undisturbed mind. When he saved himself by flight, or concealed himself from his enemies, it was in order to be able longer to assist the Catholics and to protect them against the heretics. Those who pitied him in his exile or other adversities he comforted with the words: "This storm will soon pass over." But when they represented to him the displeasures of the Arian Emperors, which he drew upon himself by his zeal for the true faith, he always undauntedly replied: "I fear God only, not men."

The Roman Martyrology says of him as follows: "At Alexandria, the feast of St. Athanasius, bishop of the same city, who was great in learning and holiness, but whom the whole world seems to have conspired to persecute. He nevertheless bravely defended the Catholic faith from the reign of Constantine to that of Valens, against the Emperors, governors, and numberless Arian bishops, from all of whom he suffered many persecutions, and was driven about from place to place. At last he was permitted to return to his Church, from which he was called to God in the reign of the Emperors Valentinian and Valens, after having been priest during 46 years, and after having valiantly fought many battles and earned many crowns of patience."

There exists at this day a creed which bears the name of St. Athanasius. It commences thus: "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he believe the Catholic faith. Whosoever keep it not wholly and inviolably, without doubt, shall be eternally lost."

Many, however, say that this creed was not written by Athanasius, but that others composed it out of the Saint's works. Nevertheless, it has been received by many non-Catholics, even by Luther himself, as a true creed. The word "Catholic," Luther changed into "Christian," which, however, is a wicked forgery. But it is easy to perceive why this was done. It was too clear in the above words that the Catholic faith is necessary for salvation and that those who have died out of its pale are lost. This sentence of Athanasius, or of some other ancient teacher, did not suit Luther and he therefore substituted the word "Christian" for "Catholic;" as if anybody could be really a Christian without being a Catholic. He had before made a similar interpolation in the ninth article of the Apostles' creed; indeed the whole heresy is a tissue of corruption and falsehood.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "This storm will soon pass over." With these words St. Athanasius comforted himself as well as others. The persecutions he compared to a storm which, although sometimes violent and fierce, does not last long. It is generally followed by cheerful weather and bright sunshine which last longer than the storm. The Saint had often had personal experience of this. At last, however, the persecutions ceased, and he possessed his See in peace. But even had adversity followed him to the end of his days, still his words above mentioned would remain true. The trials would have passed, would soon have ended, because St. Jerome rightly says: "What ends with time is of short duration," in comparison with Eternity. May you also comfort yourself with the recollection of these words when a storm assails you. It will soon pass away; it will cease; it lasts not for ever. But still, during the storm, do not neglect to follow the example of the Apostles, who, while a tempest lashed the waves of the sea, cried: "Lord save us, we perish." Your God has still the power

to calm wind and sea. "The winds and the sea obey him" (Math. viii.).

II. St. Athanasius is wrongfully accused of the most horrible vice. He defends himself, exposes the falsity of his calumniators, brings his innocence to light, but demands no vengeance of God, neither does he curse or hate his enemies. God permits you to defend yourself, if you are calumniated or falsely accused of wickedness, but he does not permit you to hate or curse your enemies, nor to demand or take vengeance on them. "Vengeance belongeth to me;" says He, "and I will repay." "The Lord is a Lord of vengeance," says David, not man. If you desire to take vengeance on your enemy, you anticipate the Lord to your own great damage, as he says: "He that seeketh to revenge himself shall find vengeance from the Lord" (Eccles. xxviii.). Such a man harms himself much more than he can harm his neighbor with all his vengeance. St. Lawrence Justinian says: "Those who desire to take vengeance on others manifest clearly that they are children of hell, where the fire is never quenched."

THIRD DAY OF MAY.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE HOLY CROSS.

The true Church celebrates to-day the discovery of that Cross which our Saviour and Redeemer has made holy, through the painful and ignominious death He suffered upon it for the salvation of all men. It happened as follows: Helena, the saintly mother of Constantine the Great, endeavored, as she was a Christian, to bring her son to the knowledge of Christ and to receive the Christian faith. But although Constantine listened to her exhortations, he deferred his conversion from time to time. Meanwhile, he had to take up arms against the tyrant Maxentius, who had proclaimed himself Emperor of Rome. When he was marching from France to Italy against him, and perceived that his army was much smaller than that of Maxentius, he turned to the God of the Christians, of whom his pious mother had so often spoken to him, and humbly implored His aid. Soon after, he and his whole army beheld in broad daylight a brightly shining cross in the heavens, on which was inscribed: "In this sign thou shalt conquer." On the night following, Christ appeared to him with the same sign, and commanded him to have a similar one made, and to use it as a military ensign during the battle.

Constantine not only joyfully obeyed the command, but had also a smaller cross made and placed on his helmet. Thus armed, he marched against his enemy into Italy, and having overcome three generals of Maxentius, who were sent to meet him, he finally conquered the tyrant himself, and arrived triumphantly at Rome. As he had only to thank the God of the Christians, and the power of the holy cross for this brilliant victory, he had the Roman Eagles torn from the banners of the army and replaced them by crosses. He at the same time issued an order that no malefactor should in future be nailed to the cross. He also gave to all his subjects the liberty to embrace the Christian faith, tore down the temples of the idols, erected many spacious churches for the Christians, and at last received holy baptism. His heart now became inflamed with the desire to see and honor the true holy Cross of the Lord.

Helena, the holy empress, who had the same ardent wish, was admonished by God in a dream, to go to Jerusalem and there search for the Cross of Christ. She undertook the journey and endeavored to ascertain what the wicked Jews had done with it. These, instigated by Satan, had buried the Cross of the Saviour,

and the crosses of the two malefactors in a deep pit, not far from the Holy Sepulchre of Christ, and had covered them with stones and rubbish. But when they perceived that many Christians went there to pray, they persuaded the heathens to erect on the holy place a shrine of the unchaste Venus, in order that the Christians, in abhorrence of the idol, should no longer visit it. This was accordingly done, and the memory of the Holy Cross which was concealed there slowly faded away. Helena, nevertheless, succeeded in inducing some Jews to show her the places where they had heard from their forefathers that Christ had been crucified and buried. She forthwith ordered the idol which stood there to be demolished, and after having removed the stones and rubbish, she directed them to dig until they had reached the sepulchre of Christ. Not far from it they found three crosses of the same form and size, with the inscription which Pilate had written and placed above the Saviour's Cross, but they were unable to recognize upon which of the crosses the Redeemer had died. St. Macarius, at that time Bishop of Jerusalem, inspired by God, advised that a sick person should be brought in contact with the three crosses, as he did not doubt that God would make known by a miracle which of them had borne the Saviour. His counsel was followed, and a dangerously sick woman was brought. The touch of the first two crosses had no effect, but no sooner had the invalid come in contact with the third, than she instantly arose in perfect health, in presence of the Empress, the bishop and numberless other persons. Further, they brought two dead bodies, into which life returned as soon as the Holy Cross was placed upon them. As there could now remain no doubt that the true Cross had been found, no words can describe the joy they all felt, but particularly the Empress, or what honors they bestowed upon the precious treasure. Helena had a magnificent church erected on the place where it was found, and placed half of the Cross there in a costly case; the other half she sent to her son Constantine who likewise deposited it in a beautiful church, built by him at Rome. From this time dates the adoration of the Holy Cross through the whole Christian world. Particles of it were sent to different countries. St. Cyril, who was, twenty years later than Macarius, bishop of Jerusalem, testifies most emphatically that particles of the Holy Cross had been sent for from all parts of the world, and although they had cut many from it, the sacred wood had not diminished, but by a visible miracle had retained its original size, which he declares he witnessed himself. The same is written by St. Paulinus. Hence the heretics and other scoffers of the holy relics have no reason to say that the particles of the Holy Cross

which are honored at so many places must be false, or to accuse the Catholic Church of deception in distributing these particles.

** PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.*

I. The holy Empress Helena searches with great care and solicitude for the holy Cross of Christ, and rested not until, to her inexpressible comfort, she had found it. Many Saints have sought crosses and sorrows and have earnestly requested God to send them such. I dare not ask so much of you. Do you think, however, that it is too much if I ask you: to carry patiently, the Cross which God lays upon you for your salvation? Himself demands this of you: "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me is not worthy of me," says He (Mat. x.). And again, He says; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke ix.). The Cross given by Christ must be borne if we wish to follow Him into heaven. In bearing this Cross we must also imitate him so as to carry it with patience. For what does it benefit, when we carry it impatiently, and only when we must? "He that is impatient suffereth damage" (Proverbs xix.), we are assured in holy writ. Because, besides that he, by his impatience, loses the benefit which he would have derived, he makes himself also guilty of punishment. Hence, what must be done? Follow the advice of the pious Thomas à Kempis: "Take up your Cross and follow Christ, and you will enter into everlasting life. He went before you and carried his Cross patiently, He died for you upon the Cross, that you also may carry your Cross and desire to die upon it." If Christ himself gave you a particle of the Cross on which he had hung and which St. Helena found, you would deem yourself

happy: but you are far more happy if you carry the Cross God sends you as though you received the entire Cross of Christ. It is neither sufficient nor necessary for your salvation to possess the Cross of Christ, or a particle of it: but it is necessary that you carry your Cross, and that you imitate the Lord's patience.

II. Jews, heathens and heretics despise the Cross of Christ; true Christians, however, esteem it highly and honor it duly. The Catholics do not worship the holy Cross, but they worship Him who has hung upon it, Christ the Lord, as He was not only man, but also the true God to whom worship is due. They honor the sacred wood on account of Him who died upon it for the salvation of men. To make the sign of the Cross is a mark of honor which we show not only to the holy Cross of the Saviour, but also to the Saviour Himself. Do not omit this sign of honor, as is done in our days by the enemies and despisers of the Cross of Christ, whose end, according to the Apostle, is destruction (Philip iii.). Sign yourself, morning and evening, before and after prayer, and also on other occasions, with the holy Cross, but devoutly, and in memory of the crucified God. "Be not ashamed," exhorts St. Cyril of Jerusalem; "be not ashamed of the Cross of Christ. If somebody hides it, sign your forehead openly with it, that Satan, at the sight of it, may flee with fear and trembling. Make use of this sign when you eat and drink, when you stand and sit, when you walk and speak, in one word, make use of it in all your actions.

FOURTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. MONICA, WIDOW.

St. Monica, mother of St. Augustine, the great teacher of sacred wisdom, was a native of Africa. She was doubly a mother to the Saint; for, she not only gave him earthly life, but also spiritual life, by regenerating him for Heaven. Her parents, who were Christians and in comfortable circumstances, brought her up in modesty and virtue. She was devoted to pious exercises from early childhood. Having heard from her mother how pleasing in the sight of God it is to overcome sleep at night, and spend the time in prayer, she forthwith began to rise during the night and pray. Nor was she less devoted to the poor. She often deprived herself of food in order to supply the wants of the indigent. She never evinced any pleasure in vainly adorning her person, but always attired herself according to her station in life. In all her words as well as actions, she endeavored to be decorous and retiring. When grown up, it was her desire to live in virginal purity, but was obedient to her parents who wished her to marry. As a wife her conduct was so exemplary that she might be held up as a model for all married people. Patricius, her husband, tormented his pious wife in a thousand different ways, as he was of a violent temper, immoral, and addicted to many vices. Monica always treated him with love and gentleness, never reproaching him for his vices. She never contradicted him when, giving way to passion, he burst out into manifold curses: but waited until his anger had passed away, and then represented his faults to him with Christian calmness. Praying to God unceasingly for his conversion, she gradually changed him so completely, that he at last led a very edifying life. The women who lived in her neighborhood, and who were acquainted with the passionate temper of Patricius, often wondered that he never struck or otherwise brutally treated her, as their husbands did to them. But Monica told them the reason of it, and taught them to be submissive to their husbands, to meet them with love and gentleness, and above all things, never to contradict them when they were angry, but to bear their faults in patience and silence. But just as anxious as Monica was to live in love and peace with her husband, so was she determined not to permit strife and contention among her household, still less other vices. She had three children, two sons and one daughter, and her greatest care was to give them a Christian education. Augustine, her first born,

however, was not obedient, especially after the death of his father, but led a wild, licentious life, regarding neither the admonitions, supplications, nor menaces of his pious mother, until at last, he fell into the heresy of the Manichees.

Meanwhile Monica regulated her widowhood entirely after the precepts which St. Paul gives in his first Epistle to his disciple Timothy. She was liberal towards the poor, assisted daily at Holy Mass, listened eagerly to the word of God, spent no time in idle gossiping, or in walking about; but read devotional books, prayed and worked. She would hear nothing of worldly pleasures, and still less of fine garments or other vanities. She loved solitude and lived a retired and peaceful life, her only trouble being the vicious conduct of her son. Shedding many tears, she prayed almost day and night to God for his conversion, and requested others, both of the Clergy and the laity, to pray for the same object. As she one day asked a bishop for his prayers, he said to her: "Go in peace, a son for whom his mother sheds so many tears cannot perish." These words gave her some comfort, but she derived still more consolation from a vision in which God distinctly announced to her the conversion of her son.

In the meantime, Augustine was desirous to leave Carthage, where he had studied rhetoric, and go to Rome. Monica endeavored to prevent his going; but Augustine secretly departed while she was at church. Scarcely, however, had he arrived in Rome, when he became dangerously ill: and he ascribed it to his mother's prayers that he did not die in his sins and go to eternal destruction. As soon as Monica was informed where her son was, she determined to go to him so as to be able to watch over him. When she, after a most dangerous sea-voyage, arrived at Milan, she found him there, as he had been called from Rome to teach rhetoric. It was then that she perceived with joy that there was a change in him, through his conversations with St. Ambrose, who, at that period, was Bishop of Milan. Monica entreated the bishop not to relax in his interest for her son, until he should be entirely converted. At length, God in his mercy complied with the holy widow's desire. Augustine renounced the Manichean heresy and was baptized in his 30th year by St. Ambrose. It may be said with truth that this conversion was the fruit of the prayers and tears of Saint Monica. The consolation that she received from her son's conversion, may be more easily imagined than described. Soon after this event, she determined to return with her son to Africa, but having reached Ostia, where they were obliged to wait for an opportunity to continue their voyage, a slight fever overtook her. At first it was not supposed dangerous, and Augustine himself relates how

edifying a conversation he had held with his holy mother on the glories of heaven. She ended it with the following words: "My son, as far as I am concerned, I expect nothing further from this world. I had only one wish, which was to see you a Catholic before I died. God has granted me more than I asked; because I see that you not only serve Him, but that you despise all earthly happiness. What, therefore, remains for me to do upon earth?" Meanwhile, her malady increased so rapidly, that nine days later, St. Monica, who so long had sighed for heaven, gave her soul, adorned with so many virtues, into the hands of her Creator, in her fifty-sixth year. What she requested before her death of her two sons who were present, St. Augustine relates as follows: "Lay my body," said she: "where you like, and allow no thought of it to trouble you. Only one thing I request of you: remember me before the Altar of the Most High wherever you may be." St. Augustine describes also how they placed the body of his holy mother by her open grave, and there offered the sacrifice of our Redemption, the Holy Mass, for the dead before they interred her. A clear evidence that, at that remote period, they also believed in purgatory, and prayed for the dead as we Catholics still do in our days.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The life of St. Monica may serve as a lesson and example to every one. As a virgin, she was modest and retiring, was devoted to prayer, was kind to the poor, took no pleasure in luxuries or elegant garments, married not without the knowledge and consent of her parents but more in obedience to them than because it was her own wish. These are all points which deserve to be especially considered and imitated by all unmarried persons. As wife, she showed almost wonderful reserve and patience. She suffered the wrong done to her in silence, but endeavored to reform her husband by kind persuasions and prayers. She evinced, however, the greatest solicitude to give her children a Christian education. Married people may learn from this how they ought to conduct themselves, especially if one has to suffer from

the other. As widow, she passed her time in the exercise of those works I have mentioned above. She loved solitude, fled even from lawful pleasures, and avoided the slightest shadow of vanity in her attire and behavior. Oh! that all widows would consider this example well, and conform their lives to it. For, to live, after the death of the husband, the same life of vanity and dissipation, to dress just as luxuriously and proudly, to find the same delight in the pleasures of the world and seek them as frequently as in the past, to be just as indolent in the exercise of charitable deeds, to spend even more time in gossiping than in prayers or in hearing the word of God, to lead a life regulated only by a love of comfort and sensuality, perhaps, even to seek greater dangers—is not living as a widow who earnestly desires

to gain her eternal salvation. St. Paul says: "If any widow have children or grandchildren; let her learn first to govern her own house, and to make a return of duty to her parents: for this is acceptable before God. But she that is a widow indeed and desolate, let her trust in God, and continue in supplications and prayers night and day. For she that lives in pleasures is dead while she is living." (I. Timothy v.).

II. St. Monica had a vicious husband and a wicked son. She, however, converted both. But how and by what means? Not by strife and contention, not by abuse and injuries, not by swearing and cursing; but by patience, by tender exhortations, by constant prayers. Oh! that all women, all parents used such means when they have bad husbands or wicked children. These are not to be changed by curses and abuse. If a husband is angry, or intoxicated or otherwise unfit to listen to reason, the wife should be silent and yield, but await a suitable time to show him his faults and exhort him to better his conduct. Contradictions or curses only pour oil into the fire and increase the evil. As far as parents are concerned, they must know that they are never allowed to curse their children or to wish them evil, let the children be ever so godless and bad. The parents sin by cursing and often very heavily.

They cause many sins which their children, in the course of time commit by cursing in the same manner: for one sees every day that children learn cursing from their parents, and become themselves as accustomed to it as their parents are. And who is responsible to God for all the curses of the children but the parents, who have set them the example? I am aware of the many excuses which the parents give, and I will answer them at another time. To day, I say only this: To curse is never permitted. God forbids it. As often as parents curse their children, so often do they act in contradiction to the law of God: they sin and cause their children to sin. To curse is not a proper, neither is it an allowed means to educate children or make them better. St. Monica used quite different means and obtained what she desired. Where has there ever been a father or a mother who made a child pious by cursing? But even if it were possible to bring up a child well and make it pious by cursing, yet would it be sinful to do it with this intention. God has forbidden it: this must suffice. "Bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord," writes St. Paul. (Eph. vi.). The correction of the Lord does not permit cursing, but on the contrary prohibits it.

FIFTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. PIUS, V. POPE.

St. Pius, the fifth of his name, Pope of Rome, was born 1504 at Bosca, a village in the Duchy of Milan, of very illustrious, but, from misfortune, impoverished parents. He received at baptism the name of Michael, almost a prediction of the zeal which he

later in life evinced in the protection of the honor of God and His Church against the heretics, the bitterest enemies of the true faith. Already in his earliest youth, he manifested an eager desire for study and for the religious life. God so ordained it that two Dominican friars came to Bosca, to whom he made known his wish. Although Michael was very young, the two friars perceived something remarkable in his character. They took him with them to their Monastery, and after having diligently studied for some time, he was received into the holy order. After he had pronounced his vows, he studied the higher sciences and made such extraordinary progress, that he was soon appointed to teach others. This he not only did with pleasure to himself, but with profit to those he taught. In like manner, he filled for several years, the office of preacher, and that of superior in several monasteries, as he had been assiduous in maintaining regular observance both by precept and example.

Meanwhile the fame of his virtue and knowledge spread through the whole land: hence he was appointed Inquisitor in matters of faith, the duties of which office he discharged for a long time to the great benefit of the Church. Many cities and countries are indebted to his vigilance, either that they were cleansed from heresy, or kept entirely free from it. He feared no menaces, no persecutions from the heretics, no danger of assassination, and showed himself always brave where the protection of the true faith was concerned. A great many heretical books, which were circulated among the Catholics, he gathered together and had them publicly burned. In his sermons he exhorted the Catholics to remain steadfast in their faith, and admonished the heretics to conversion. He refuted their errors so thoroughly that nobody was able to contradict him. In recompense of so many useful exertions, Paul IV, consecrated him bishop, and soon after raised him to the dignity of Cardinal. Michael resisted for a long time, but was at last obliged to obey, and he devoted himself entirely to the labors of his high calling. He visited his whole Diocese, preached wherever he went, reformed abuses, made many wise regulations and endeavored to preside as a faithful shepherd over his flock. After the death of Pope Pius IV, Michael was elected, by special inspiration of God, as his successor. He, however, was so dismayed by the choice, that he burst into tears: but recognizing the will of God, he submitted and took the name of Pius V. He commenced his reign by works of charity towards the poor, and by regulating his own household, that it might serve as a model of retirement and piety, not only to the Cardinals and Bishops, but also to the whole people of Christendom. We can not attempt to detail all that St. Pius accomplished while he occu-

pied the chair of St. Peter, for the welfare of the true Church, for the protection of the true religion, and for the uprooting of heresy, as well as for the improvement of morals in the whole Christian world. The Roman Breviary says a great deal in very few words. According to it, St. Pius displayed a particular zeal in spreading abroad the true faith: an untiring diligence in restoring perfectly the discipline of the Church, an uninterrupted watchfulness in exterminating errors in matters of faith, a readiness to assist the indigent, and an invincible fortitude in maintaining the prerogatives of the Apostolic Chair. He not only sent envoys to all Christian Courts, but also many apostolic men to all the countries of the Christian world, to protect the true faith against the heresies which at that time prevailed. France, the Netherlands and Germany are therefore under great obligations to him. He showed himself very gracious towards the society of Jesus, which had been founded shortly before his reign, by St. Ignatius, to protect the true faith and to defeat heresy. When the Emperor of the Turks menaced the destruction of the whole of Christendom with his immense military power, Pius V. assembled his whole force against him, emptied the entire treasury of the Church, and exhorted all the Christian Princes to follow his example. That God might bless the arms of the Christian host, he ordered at Rome public prayers and pilgrimages which he personally accompanied. He ordered public prayers at the holy house of Loretto and in the entire Christian world. Besides this, he offered many penances to God for the same end. The result of all their pious exertions was a most glorious victory, the memory of which he desired should be annually celebrated under the name of "Saint Mary of Victory" and on the festival of the holy Rosary; as he was convinced that the victory was to be ascribed to the intercession of the Virgin Mother. At the same hour in which the arms of the Christian conquered, it was revealed to the Pope at Rome, whereupon he admonished all present to give thanks to God. It was his intention to take the field once more against the Turks, but he was prevented by a most painful sickness. Receiving it as a messenger of death, he prepared himself for his last hour by devoutly partaking of the holy Sacrament and by fervent prayers. During the last fifty days of his life, he was in unmitigated pain, and frequently cried "Lord, increase the sufferings but increase also the patience!" He had the penitential Psalms, and the Passion of Christ read slowly to him, and encouraged himself by comforting verses and prayers from Holy Writ, until he ended his pious life, in the year 1572, after having reigned over the Church of God six years and three months. There is hardly a virtue of which the life of this holy

Pope gives not a glorious example. He daily said, or heard Mass with fervent devotion ; loved the Crucified Saviour most ardently ; saying all his prayers before His image, and at their close piously kissing His feet. One day, as according to his usual custom, he was about to kiss the feet of his crucifix, the image drew them back ; by which means God saved his servant from death, as a wicked person had poisoned them. On Maunday Thursday he washed the feet of twelve poor men, and once, seeing that one of them had a disgusting ulcer, he kissed it with heroic self-control. He prayed with such fervor and devotion that the Turks said, that they feared more the prayers of Pope Pius than the conjoined arms of the Christian Princes.

He accompanied his prayers with great austerity to himself, from which he would not relax even during his sickness ; only on three days of the week did he taste meat and then partook of so small a quantity that his whole life may be looked upon as continual fast.

But he was as kind to others as he was severe to himself, especially to the sick and the timid poor. He personally visited them and with spiritual comfort, brought them also temporal relief. The newly converted he received with a father's love, providing them also with temporal food : but he never manifested any undue preference towards his relatives. Upon one occasion when he was told that he should provide his relatives better with money and high offices, he answered ; " God made me Pope not to take care of my own flesh and blood, but of His Church." Any wrong done to him he always freely forgave, and treated his enemies, calumniators and persecutors with admirable gentleness. No word that could hurt any one, or that betokened impatience, or that was in the least unsuitable to be uttered by a Saint, ever passed his lips. He even bore any wrong done to him in silence. All the time that he did not devote to prayer he gave *unweariedly* to the duties of his high station. To those who, under the pretext of sparing his health, advised him not to labor so unceasingly, he replied : " God has installed me in this office not to indulge my own comfort, but to advance the well-being of those in my charge. The head of the Church must attend more to his conscience than his body." An angelical purity he kept inviolable. Many were witnesses that in the hour of his departure from earth his soul, accompanied by angels, rose towards heaven, there to partake, for all eternity, of the joys which the Almighty promises to his faithful servants.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Have you observed how severe St. Pius was to himself, how charitable to others, how devoted to God? Have you no desire to imitate him at least in some degree? Hugh, the Cardinal, admonishes us as follows: "Be always severe to yourself, charitable towards others, devout to God." This is characteristic of the disciples of Christ among whom you desire to be numbered. It behooves them also, after the example of St. Pius, that they show a true Christian patience in suffering, and treat their persecutors with gentleness. What is your patience? Why do you not, when in suffering, have recourse to those means that were used by St. Pius? How do you treat those who persecute you? You say that you pardon them; but what is the meaning of those bitter, impatient, and for a Christian, unsuitable words that you sometimes utter against them? St. Pius did not act thus, and it is unbecoming a Christian. "To grieve his neighbor by unkind words ought to be far from any Christian. You have not received speech from God, to hurt others with your words; but to praise the Almighty and give thanks to Him." Thus writes St. Chrysostom.

II. "God made me Pope, not

that I should take care of flesh and blood, but of His Church. God has installed me in this office not to indulge in my own comfort, but to advance the well-being of those in my charge." These are the words of St. Pius, by which he intimated that the end and aim of his calling was constantly to be before his mind. Do you ever think of this end and aim? Do you regulate your life in conformity with it? How does it happen, then, that you are so slothful in the service of the Almighty, so attached to the things of this world, so sparing of the time which you give to your salvation? You surely intimate by it, either that you do not believe God has created you with a high end and aim, or that you never think earnestly about it. Begin therefore to-day, and make this resolution: God has created me that I should serve him and gain heaven, not that I should serve the world and seek after earthly goods. I will then henceforth serve God zealously and neglect nothing to attain salvation. "When shall we begin," says St. Chrysostom, "to serve God as ardently as we have served the world, to exert ourselves for heaven as we have done for earth, to be as assiduous to practise virtues as we have been addicted to vices?"

SIXTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, CONFESSOR.

The Church celebrates to-day the festival of St. John of the Latin Gate, but as the event which gave occasion to this festival will be related in the month of December, in the life of the Apostle, we will here speak of another St. John, who, according to the Roman Martyrology, was renowned for his learning and sanctity. He received his name from Damascus, a city in Syria,

where he was born and which at that period was under the Sceptre of the Saracens. His parents were greatly esteemed, not only for their nobility and wealth, but much more on account of their kindness to the poor and their great liberality. They devoted the greater part of their income to ransom the prisoners, and to assist the hermits in the Holy Land, who were at that time much persecuted. Among the prisoners whom they had liberated was a priest from Calabria, called Gosmas, who, being a man of great learning, instructed John, then a boy, with great care both in the liberal arts and in Theology. The father of John was Governor of Damascus, by special favor of the reigning prince, who was himself a Pagan. After his father's death, John succeeded him in his high office, with permission to live according to the Christian religion, and he used his influence for the protection of the Christians.

Meanwhile, Leo the Isaurian, Emperor of the East, was destroying holy images and persecuting those who honored them, and John wrote several Epistles and books on the subject, by which he proved that to honor the holy images was not idolatry, but that it tended to benefit mankind; while the persecution of the same was not wrong, but wicked and sinful. This strengthened the Catholics in their veneration of the holy images, but aroused the wrath of the Emperor against John. He determined to revenge himself and had recourse to fraudulent means, which were the more despicable as they emanated from a man of such exalted station. He caused a letter to be written, by some wicked person, in the name of St. John, requesting the Emperor to send an army to Damascus and take the city again from the Saracens, promising to assist him in the enterprize.

This forged letter, accompanied by one written by the Emperor himself, in which he represented John as a traitor, was sent to the Saracen prince, with whom, as before said, John stood in high favor, in order to turn him against the Saint. He added that he disdained to make use of so shameful an act of treason to break the existing peace, but that he hoped the traitor would be rigorously dealt with. The Saracen prince was furious on reading these letters. Having caused John to be brought before him, he showed him both letters, and reproaching him with his treason, gave vent to his rage in the most abusive language. The Saint called God to witness that he had never written letters to Constantinople, except on the subject of honoring images, and requested that the matter might be investigated, as it was clear that there existed some deception. But the furious prince would listen neither to prayers nor protestations, and ordered the executioner to cut off the saint's right hand without delay, and

to hang it in the market-place as a warning to others. The order was publicly executed to the great grief of the Christians. The Saint suffered the pain and the ignominy with christian fortitude, affirming, at the same time, with undaunted courage, that he was innocent of the crime of which he stood accused. On the evening of the same day, he sent to the prince asking permission to bury his hand. The prince, who had already discovered the deceit, granted his request and sent him his hand.

John, filled with trust in Christ and his holy Mother, took his hand, went into the chapel of his house, sank down before the image of the Blessed Virgin, and cried: "Heavenly Queen! Mother of Mercy! Thou knowest that I lost my hand in defence of the honored images of Thee and Thy Son. Confound thou now the error and let truth prevail. Let this hand grow again to my arm, that with it I may still defend Thine and Thy Son's holy name: I will use it for no other purpose." While thus praying he held his hand to the arm, and, having said the last words, he fell into a light slumber, during which he seemed to hear the Blessed Virgin say: "Behold thy hand is again on thine arm. Go, now, and perform thy promise." John awoke, and found his hand so perfectly grown to his arm, that no one would have believed it had been cut off, had not a red mark, like a thin thread, remained as a token of the miracle. How happy the Saint was and how fervently he gave thanks to God and his holy mother may easily be imagined. The miracle could not be kept secret and the prince, being informed of it, called the Saint into his presence, and humbly begging his pardon, assured him of his future favor. John, however, desired no other grace than to be released from public service, that he might pass the remainder of his life in a monastery or in the desert.

This being granted, he divided his wealth among the poor, went to Jerusalem, and thence to the Convent of St. Sabas, where, obliged to obey an old Monk, he was for a time occupied with the lowest menial labor. The Blessed Virgin, however, appearing to this monk, told him to let John work against the heretics in defense of the true faith. The monk informed the saint of the command of the divine Mother; and the obedient servant of Christ began anew to combat not only the Iconoclasts, but also the other enemies of the Church, while at the same time, for the instruction of the Catholics, he wrote many books replete with heavenly wisdom. The patriarch of Jerusalem ordained him priest in the year 750. Enfeebled, at length, by severe penances and incessant labor, he became sick and left this world, old in years and rich in merits, to receive the eternal reward that Christ promised to those that follow Him.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. John protects the honor of the holy images. We do not worship holy images, but we honor them on account of those whom they represent. They are kept in churches and dwelling-houses on account of their beneficial influence. For, as St. Thomas teaches, they serve, first, to instruct us in virtue and in the mysteries of our faith; secondly, they recall to our memory and keep before our mind, the sufferings and noble works of our Saviour and the Saints; thirdly, they encourage us to virtue, to piety, and to the imitation of Christ and the Saints. Therefore, did St. John act rightly in opposing those who sought to destroy them, and therefore, also, is it very praiseworthy to make such images and to keep them in our apartments, our prayer-books, &c. What, however, shall be said or thought of those, who instead of holy and edifying pictures, make, sell and buy impure pictures, or give them a place in their houses? Those who speak and judge in accordance with the Christian doctrine must acknowledge that such persons commit great sin, on account of the evil which arises or may arise from it. A single unchaste speech, a single impure song, a single page of a licentious book, may give rise to many hundred evil thoughts, followed by wrong and sinful deeds, while a single look upon an obscene picture may give rise to the same results. Who dares to deny this truth?

The impression a book makes upon those who read it, is the same that a picture makes upon those who behold it. The latter teaches even the illiterate to imitate. Those who cannot read one letter can read pictures. "Immodesty is learned when it is seen in pictures." Thus writes St. Gregory. Suetonius, a

pagan author, relates that the lewd Emperor Tiberius filled the rooms of his palace with the most loathsome pictures, that he might entice those who came to him to the vilest deeds in which he delighted. According to my judgment, the devil has the same intention in endeavoring to place unchaste pictures before the eyes of men. And who can measure all the sin he has thus provoked, or count the priceless souls he has thus cast into Hell? Pagan lawgivers have forbidden such pictures, that the horrible vice might not spread to the injury of public welfare. "One ought not to suffer," says Aristotle, "unchaste speeches in a city, because from the liberty to speak impurely arises the liberty to live impurely. When we however interdict unchaste speeches, it is obvious that the contemplation of unchaste pictures must be still more forbidden. Hence the Government should take care that neither unchaste pictures nor images be suffered in the city." Blind heathens have thus acknowledged that an unchaste picture gives rise to sin and vice. Are we Christians blinder than the heathen? St. Augustine relates of a youth, who by seeing an impure story painted on a wall was tempted to the most abominable vice. Oh! that the same had not happened to innumerable others! As the holy Fathers have endeavored, in order to prevent this, to preserve the custom of honoring holy images, in an equal degree they have also labored to destroy licentious pictures. Read, as proof of this, what St. Charlès Borromeo ordained for his bishopric: "A father of a family," these are his words, "shall permit nothing in his house which, in point of modesty, is unsuitable to a Christian household. Immodest, unchaste pictures

he ought to burn," &c. The motive of the holy Cardinal in making this regulation was no other than the great harm which such pictures do to the morality of men. He ordered such pictures to be burned, because he believed that it was better, that they should be committed to the flames in this world than that souls, bought with the precious blood of our Saviour, should be led into mortal sin by them, and at last go into the flames of hell.

II. St. John's hand, so unjustly cut off, was restored by a miracle, because he used it in protection of the holy images. Thus did God recompense, here on earth, the good use his servant made of his hand. What recompense, I ask again, can those hope for, who use their hands in the production of immodest, unchaste pictures, as also those who either sell or buy such pictures, or keep them in their rooms? I well know that people seek to vindicate themselves by many excuses: but will these be one day accepted by God? The artist, be he painter or sculptor, says: "I have not made this picture or this statue to give scandal, but to show my art." Is it not, however, possible to show one's art in other subjects? Really that art must be very unfortunate which is used to offend the majesty of God, and to place the artist and others in danger of everlasting destruction. Those who buy and sell such pictures also pretend that they do it not with any intention of giving scandal, as the artist says. But is that enough for the avoidance of sin? Certainly not. For if the picture is of such a nature as to give scandal, he who produced it, or he who keeps it, commits sin, even though he does not intend to give scandal. Just as those commit sin who dress immodestly, who speak licentiously, or who read or write

unchaste books. They may not have the intention of giving scandal, but they do so nevertheless by such a dress, such conversation, or the perusal of such books. Some say: "Intelligent people are not scandalized by them: They are not tempted by looking at them." I, however, ask, "who are these intelligent people? Do they perhaps belong to those of whom St. Cyprian says: "The devil does not tempt those he already has in his power?" Woe to you, if you belong to these intelligent people. "Silly, scrupulous persons alone are scandalized," cries another, "not I." But was St. Charles Borromeo, or were many other learned and holy men, silly, or scrupulous, when they, for fear of scandal, ordered such pictures to be destroyed? You are not scandalized; you are not tempted. That may be; but can you tell what may happen? Do you know that others, who see such pictures at your house, are not scandalized and perhaps tempted by them to commit great sin? Do you know what may happen to you because you have such confidence in yourself? The same I ask of those who, possessing immoral pictures, keep them hidden as long as they live that nobody may be scandalized by them. Do you know into whose hands they may fall and what sin they may occasion? And who will one day have to answer for those sins before God? whichever way you look there is danger. Does he not therefore act more in accordance with reason who keeps as far from temptation as possible? Did St. Charles Borromeo act wrongly when he ordered all immoral pictures to be destroyed, that we may be safe from sin and far away from danger? "We cannot make ourselves too secure where eternity is in danger," says St. Bernard.

THE SEVENTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. STANISLAUS, BISHOP AND MARTYR.

Cracow, in Poland, was the native place of St. Stanislaus. His parents, who were as virtuous as they were rich, had been married thirty years without having offspring, until at last God heard their prayers and bestowed a son upon them, who in the first years of childhood gave promises of his future holiness. Innocence spoke in every feature, he loved prayer above all earthly pleasure, and seemed to have inherited from his mother the deepest compassion for the poor. He began his studies at home, but finished them at Paris with great renown. When he returned home, his parents were dead and as he had determined to go into a monastery to serve God, he divided his fortune among the poor. Lambert, however, bishop of Cracow, on becoming acquainted with his talents and knowledge, saw how great would be his influence among the clergy, and persuaded him to receive a canonicate. After being invested with this dignity, Stanislaus led so blameless and holy a life that, on the death of Lambert, he was unanimously chosen his successor. The humble man was very unwilling to accept the honor, but he was equally zealous in fulfilling his duties when, being obliged to comply, he had been duly consecrated. He personally visited every parish in his bishopric and was unwearied in assisting his flock in all their temporal as well as spiritual wants. It was said by every one that the bishop's revenues belonged to the poor. To visit the sick and give aid and comfort to them was his daily occupation, and the leisure moments, which were left him by the duties of his sacred office, he gave not to idle amusement but to devout exercises. He was extremely rigorous towards his own person and seldom divested himself of his penitential robe. He kept an almost continued fast and in short lived in such a manner that he was called throughout the land the holy Bishop.

At that period, the king of Poland was Boleslaus II, who was hated and despised by every one on account of his cruelty and great immorality. As no one else dared to censure his vicious conduct, Stanislaus fearlessly exposed to him the scandal which he gave to others, and exhorted him, with tears in his eyes and upon bended knees, to reform. The King promised to follow the bishop's admonition, but instead of so doing, his conduct became worse than ever. Among other vicious deeds, he abducted the wife of a nobleman and kept her to the great indig-

nation of the whole nobility. Stanislaus went to the King a second time, and like John the Baptist, conjured him most solemnly to change his scandalous life, remonstrating with him on the enormity of his crime in living with another man's wife. Boleslaus, enraged at this, turned away from him, resolved to put the severe lecturer out of the way. This he determined to do by means of a false accusation. The Saint had bought of a nobleman by the name of Peter, an estate for his church, for which he had paid in money. The purchase had taken place with the consent of the King, and the estate had been in the possession of the Church three years, when Boleslaus caused the heirs of Peter (who had meanwhile died), to be informed, that if they wished to obtain the estate for themselves, they should bring an action against the bishop, and that he would assist them. The heirs followed the advice, alleging that Stanislaus had purchased the estate from their father, but had not yet paid for it. The bishop declared the accusation false, and summoned witnesses. The latter appeared but gave no evidence, as they had been forbidden so to do. Trusting in God, the Saint said to the king and the assembled counsellors; "Well, as these witnesses do not dare to speak, I shall, in three days, place before you one whom you will be forced to believe, namely the former proprietor of the estate, himself." The King laughed derisively, as the latter had been dead more than two years: he, however, received the bishop's word. The Saint fasted and prayed during three days and nights. On the fourth day, clad in his priestly robes, after Mass he went to the grave of Peter, and having caused the earth to be removed, he prayed, and then called on the dead and commanded him, in the name of the Holy Trinity to arise and go with him to testify to the truth. And behold a miracle! The dead arose in the presence of all the assembled people and followed the bishop to the King and the councillors. Mute with amazement, they gazed at the unexpected witness; but Stanislaus said: "Here is he whom I promised to summon; he will reveal the truth." Upon this Peter distinctly said; "Yes I have of my own free will sold my estate to the bishop and received the price of it in money. My heirs wrong him." Having given this evidence, Peter was led back to his grave. Stanislaus, against the wish of the King, was discharged and lived for some time unmolested.

When, however, the conduct of the King became more and more scandalous, the nobles of the country requested the bishop once more to remonstrate with him. The fearless Saint gave several days to fasting and prayer, and also offered to God other penances that his exhortation might be more successful than the

former. After this, he went to the King and represented to him the danger of eternal damnation, which became more imminent, with the increased years that God gave him to repent and do penance. When he, however, saw that neither remonstrances nor entreaties were of any avail, he threatened him with excommunication. This threat the Saint at last put into execution as the King instead of reforming, became daily worse. At length the King, unwilling to be longer censured by the Saint, sent some men of his guard to the Chapel of St. Michael, to which he had been informed that the Saint had gone to say holy Mass,—with orders to put him immediately to death. The soldiers went to the Chapel to obey the royal command, but seized with sudden fear, they fled and frankly confessed to the King, that it was impossible for them to lay hands on so venerable a man. He then twice more sent other soldiers with the same order, but all returned saying that a heavenly light, which surrounded the Saint, prevented them from touching him. Wild with rage, the King rushed into the chapel and running towards the bishop who stood officiating before the holy Altar, he clove his head with one stroke of his sword, and the Saint sank dead upon the ground. Having had the body dragged out of the Chapel, the King caused it to be cut in pieces, and gave orders that it should be left a prey to the birds. But Divine Providence decreed otherwise. Four large eagles guarded the mangled members of the holy body until some persons, taking courage, laid them together with the intention of burying them. A new miracle, however, took place. By the power of the Most High, the members were joined in such a manner that the entire body of the Saint was lying before the eyes of those who had come to take it away. All present thanked God and praised the Saint's fearlessness and constancy. They laid the body in a grave before the door of the Chapel where he had received the Crown of Martyrdom. Ten years later, the sacred remains were transferred to the Cathedral of Cracow. During the ten years that the body lay before the Chapel-door, bright, heavenly, lights were seen upon it, with which God glorified his faithful servant upon earth.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St Stanislaus endeavored to move the king to repentance and reformation. He knew of no better means to effect this than to represent to him the danger of eternal damnation. And, in fact, whoever is not</p>	<p>moved by the fear of eternal damnation, will be moved by nothing else. The truth of this is shown by the wicked king Boleslaus. He heeded not the fatherly exhortations of the holy bishop, disregarded the</p>
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danger to which he exposed himself, not only continued his crimes, but committed new ones, and went to eternal destruction because he repented not. So far do they go who neglect to root out of their hearts the passion of lust, but indulge it without shame, until it becomes, as it were, a second nature. "The wicked man when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth," says Holy Writ (Prov. xviii.). He overlooks sin and does not care for it, however enormous and despicable it may be. He slights the admonitions of the clergy, the inspired words of God, the danger of eternal damnation, yes, even damnation itself. "His heart," according to the words of Job, "shall be as hard as a stone, and as firm as a smith's anvil" (Job. xli.). And what can follow such hardening, but an unhappy end and eternal destruction. "A hard heart shall fare badly at the last," says the Holy Ghost (Eccl. iii.). If you do not wish to become so miserable, hasten to do penance, if you have committed sins. Make no habit of evil deeds. Commence to reform in time. Picture to yourself the danger of eternal damnation, in which you are so long as you remain in mortal sin. Pray God to give you a true knowledge of this danger, and sufficient grace to enable you to tear yourself away from it.

II. St. Stanislaus informed the king that, if he did not repent, the danger of his damnation would increase with the time God grants him to repent and do penance. An important truth : God punishes some sinners, like the revolting angels, directly after they have committed sin. Others He punishes not imme-

diately, but looks on a long time, during which they commit sin after sin. This leads some to take greater liberties and to sin still more; according to the words of Holy writ; "because sentence is not speedily pronounced against the evil, the children of men commit evil without fear" (Ecc. viii.). "They imagine that they are secure of punishment," says St. Leo, "because they are not immediately punished." Such people ought to know that because they are not immediately punished, they have to fear so much more. For, it is an ineffable grace of God, a grace which He confers upon them and thousands of others, that He does not punish them directly, but leaves them time to repent. If they do not make use of this grace, but even spend the time bestowed upon them, in offending the majesty of God still more, they will most certainly have to render a strict account of it, and must one day expect so much severer punishment. "The greater the benefits man receives from God, the greater the punishment that awaits him if he commits sin and continues in it," writes St. Chrysostom. And St. Augustine says: "The longer God looks on, so much the more painfully and terribly will He punish." If you wish not to experience this to your own eternal sorrow, follow the admonition of St. Augustine: "If God puts off the punishment, do not you put off repentance." And Origen says: "The mercy which God manifests towards you when He gives you time to repent, has a limit, and it is unknown to you how great it is, or how long it will last."

THE EIGHTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. WALBURGE, ABBESS.

St. Walburge, celebrated through all Germany, was a native of England, and born of royal and saintly parents, Richard and Wunna. St. Willibald, Bishop of Eichstadt and St. Winnibald, Abbot of Heidenheim, were her brothers while St. Boniface, Archbishop of Maintz, was a near relative, a brother of her mother. The holy parents brought her up in holiness, so that she herself early became a Saint. Her conduct was never childish, she never showed any empty vanity and much less frivolity: all was innocence and godliness. She took no delight in honor, riches, or other worldly advantages, but lived in the midst of the world, in a magnificent palace, surrounded only by a few persons of a similar mind, occupied with prayer, devout reading and needle-work. She had early determined never to receive any other bridegroom than Him "whose pastures are among the lilies." Hence she avoided all unnecessary intercourse with the opposite sex, in order to preserve her innocence and chastity. At the convent at Winburn, where she lived several years, she attained great spiritual perfection and confirmed her resolution to consecrate her virginity to God.

After the death of her parents, her two brothers, who at that period preached the gospel in Germany, requested Walburge to leave England, and join them, in order to institute the monastic life and induce others also to adopt it. To this end they sent several trustworthy persons to accompany her on her journey. Accordingly Walburge left her home accompanied by thirty matrons and virgins from the nobility, whose only desire was to lead a religious life under the guidance of such holy men. During their voyage they encountered such a terrific storm, that all who were in the ship feared every moment that it would be wrecked. St. Walburge alone was undisturbed and after having fervently prayed to the Almighty, she went fearlessly on the deck of the vessel and commanded in the name of Christ, the Evil Spirits who had occasioned the tempest to depart. They fled and with them passed the danger in which the vessel had been, and Walburge with her pious companions, arrived, in the year 748, safely at Mainz, where St. Boniface and St. Willibald received them with great joy; when, however, Walburge heard that her brother Winnibald had not only converted the heathens in Thuringia, but also directed the Christians to lead a religious life, she repaired to him

with several of her companions, desiring to retire into a cloister under his guidance. As soon as she had arrived, she informed her brother of her pious desire, who rejoicing in it, bestowed upon her the veil and appointed a quiet solitary spot in Thuringia for her, where she, with her associates, might lead a religious life according to the rule of St. Benedict. Indescribable was the joy of St. Walburge and her companions, and great their zeal to ascend the paths of sanctity. St. Walburge practised all the virtues which a holy nun may be supposed to possess. She was a model to all, and conducted herself more like an angel than a human being.

Several years later, St. Winnibald, with the permission of St. Boniface, left Thuringia, and with another friar repaired to Franconia, to seek a place where, unknown, he could serve God. Having found a place, he bought it and built a chapel and a small cloister which he called Heidenheim. Soon after, he sent for his sister Walburgis for whom he had also erected a convent. Both lived with a few religious in these cloisters so holy a life, that their fame was spread abroad everywhere. Hence many persons of both sexes came to join them in serving the Most High. God sent also many of the nobility, as well as of the wealthy class, who bestowed abundant means to erect two larger cloisters, one for men the other for women, and both were filled with servants and handmaids of the Almighty. Winnibald and Walburge governed these cloisters for many years with great wisdom and holiness, when at last, in the year 761, God called Winnibald to receive his eternal reward. St. Willabald, having come to Heidenheim, commanded his sister to take the direction of both cloisters as Abbess. Although the holy virgin most earnestly declined, she was at length obliged to consent, as the religious themselves desired it. God bestowed upon her especial graces to administer successfully her new functions. She was the first at prayers and devout exercises; the most humble in performing the hardest labor; modest and kind in governing those under her; the most austere in fulfilling the rules of the order; and in all things a most perfect model of virtue; on which account she was highly esteemed by all. She never suffered her heart to faint when sometimes the community was destitute of the means of existence, but manifested a wonderful trust in Providence, Who oftentimes came miraculously to her aid.

The Almighty was pleased to make His handmaid celebrated by the miracles He wrought through her. One of these was the following: Not far from Heidenheim resided a nobleman, whose only daughter had suddenly been seized by so dangerous a disease, that her death was hourly expected. Walburge having heard of

it went in the evening to the house, of this gentleman; visited the sick maiden and desired to be left alone with her. This being permitted, she said her prayers for the sick, and while the parents, bowed down with grief, were expecting the news of their daughter's death, she was suddenly restored to health and life. The parents, whose happiness was too great for words, most humbly manifested their gratitude to the Saint, offering her many costly gifts. But she, accepting nothing, requested only that they would offer thanks to the Almighty for the grace He had bestowed upon them. Passing over other similar miracles which she performed. I will only relate some occurrences which took place before and after the happy death of the abbess.

For seventeen years she had governed most praiseworthily the two convents in her charge, and had continued in her virtuous life to a very advanced age, when it pleased God to call her from this earth into eternal life, through a happy death on the 25th of February. The holy body diffused a delicious fragrance. When a man touched it, it shrank together and trembled, as if to show that as the chaste virgin had never permitted the contact of the opposite sex, so she did not wish it even after death. Willibald, her holy brother, at first deposited her body near that of Winnibald, but ninety years later it was removed to Eichstadt. To this hour there flows a miraculous oil out of the breast of this holy Virgin, by the use of which numberless sick have regained health, whole books are filled with evidence of this fact. This holy oil has been flowing for more than nine hundred years and can be regarded only as an undoubted heavenly miracle, and at the same time as an incontestible proof of the truth of our holy church and religion, in which alone is salvation: for a real miracle can never be wrought to confirm an error.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. When destitute of the proper means of existence, St. Walburge was never faint-hearted, but evinced a wonderful trust in Providence. There are persons who endeavor to lead a Christian life, but who, in want, are disquieted, sad, and faint-hearted. Such do not possess sufficient trust in Providence, and just this fault is often the reason that they are in want and poverty. Man, of course, must labor for his maintenance; but he ought always to

think that there is a God in heaven on whom every thing depends, and that this God will not let him want for anything that may be needful for his salvation. In Him he ought to place unwavering trust, if he endeavors to serve Him rightly. "He who created thee will also maintain thee," says St. Augustine. "Will He, who gives nourishment to a murderer, withhold it from the pious and righteous? He who lets His sun shine on the good and the

wicked, will also feed thee. Or, is it to be supposed that He, who maintains those who will one day be eternally damned, will forsake those who will go into everlasting life?" Therefore follow the admonition of St. Peter, who writes: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you" (I. Peter v.).

II. The dead body of St. Walburge trembled when touched by a man. How the chaste virgin must have abhorred this when she lived! Learn from her what you have to do, if you wish to live chastely and piously. Embraces, frivolous conversation, unnecessary and too free intercourse with the other sex, reading licentious books, witnessing immoral plays, and other similar things, are more to be feared than

death, because they violate chastity and offend God much more than the people of our time suppose. Ask your own conscience, if you have ever sinned against chastity, if it is not true that every thing is dangerous that threatens the purity of morals? If you, therefore, love your salvation, follow the advice of St. Paul: "From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves" (I. Thess. v.). Do you understand? not only from evil, but even from all appearance of evil we must refrain. We must not only shun mortal sin, but also venial sin, trifling as it may appear. "Fear to offend in the least the Lord your God" writes St. Anselm. "Who-soever observes this will surely also guard himself against greater sin.

NINTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUM, BISHOP.

St. Gregory who, on account of his great knowledge in Sacred science, is surnamed the Theologian, was born at Nazianzum, in the year 300. His father, whose name was also Gregory, his mother, Nonna, his brother Cæsarius, and Gorgonia, his sister, are all honored as Saints. At Athens, where St. Gregory devoted himself to study, he became acquainted with St. Basil who had made his home there with the same intention. They became most intimate friends, as both were virtuous and diligent. They secluded themselves from all frivolous young men, shunned gaming, idleness, and other vices of youth, cultivating only piety and knowledge. They knew of only two roads, one of which led to school, the other to church. After having finished his studies, Basil returned to his home, but Gregory remained and studied eloquence, in which he was in after years unsurpassed. At that time also, Julian studied at Athens, who afterwards became Emperor and was called the Apostate. In regard to the manners and behavior of this prince, St. Gregory said at that time; "Oh what a monster the Roman Empire nourishes in its bosom!" At the same time he predicted, that if Julian should ever wear

the imperial crown, he would become the great enemy and persecutor of Christendom, which unhappily became true. After several years, St. Gregory left Athens and returned to his native place. One day, while studying, he was overtaken by sleep, and it appeared to him that he saw two beautiful virgins who came as if wishing to speak to him. He asked who they were and what they desired. "One of us," they answered, "is chastity, the other wisdom. God has sent us to be your friends and remain constantly with you." His life proved that this vision was no empty dream. Gregory preserved his chastity inviolable, and was endowed by the Almighty with such wisdom, that on account of it he became celebrated throughout the whole world. Great men, among whom was St. Jerome, often travelled many miles to hear him speak.

Having been ordained priest, he went secretly to St. Basil, who had retired to the desert of Pontus. There they lived in the greatest harmony, but, at the same time, in the greatest rigor: occupied only in prayer and in studying the holy Scriptures.

After the lapse of some years, St. Gregory returned again to his home, to bring back to the true faith his father who, not out of wickedness, but out of simplicity and ignorance, had been deluded by the Arians. Gregory happily extricated him from his error and brought him to the true faith. Meanwhile Basil became Bishop of Cæsarea, and most earnestly requested Gregory to take the small bishopric of Sasima, as the far spreading heresy demanded a strong opposition. Gregory allowed himself to be prevailed upon and accepted the See. When, however, another one came who asserted that the office was his, he gave place to him and retired. They wished him afterwards to take charge of the church at Nazianzum, but he arranged matters in such a manner that they chose some one else. He, however, did not succeed so well in Constantinople. He had gone thither to oppose the heretics, who had filled the whole city with their poison, to defend the Catholic faith and teach its doctrines to the people. After he had labored there some time with great success, Peter, patriarch of Alexandria, nominated him patriarch of Constantinople, and Gregory was obliged to take this heavy burden. All his thoughts were now directed to exterminate heresy, and to restore the ancient prestige of the church. The Catholics had at that time only one church where they assembled, the heretics having taken possession of all the others. St. Gregory, however, so brought it about that the newly chosen Emperor Theodosius came himself to Constantinople and gave the cathedral back to the Catholics, although the heretics opposed it with all their power. This enraged the latter to such a degree

that they hired a villain to assassinate the patriarch. The Saint was sick in bed when the murderer came under the pretext of visiting him. As he, however, was alone with him and therefore had every opportunity of committing the crime, God suddenly changed his heart, and falling at the feet of the Saint, he confessed his wicked intention and asked forgiveness. The Saint said; "May God, who protected me, forgive you; I ask you nothing but that you forsake your heresy." Much more had he to suffer from the heretics, but it in no wise slackened his zeal. The Catholics also gave him just cause of complaint.

Among the bishops assembled in council a dispute arose concerning the validity of Gregory's election. The Saint represented to them that he had not in any manner sought the office, but that it had been forced upon him against his desire; perceiving, however, that all were not satisfied with his explanation, and fearing that the peace of the church might be materially endangered to the detriment of the whole Christian community, he arose and addressed the assemblage in the following manner: "Dear colleagues, and joint-shepherds of the flock of Christ; it would be very unbecoming to your dignity, should you, whose office it is to exhort others to peace, become disunited among yourselves. Am I the cause of your discord? Behold, I am not better than the prophet Jonas; cast me, therefore, into the sea and the tempest will be calmed. Although I am innocent of your charges, I will suffer without a murmur, that unanimity may be restored among you." After having thus spoken calmly and sweetly, he took leave of all present and went to the Emperor, whom he acquainted with his resolution to leave Constantinople. The Emperor at first refused his consent, but the Saint knew so well how to represent to him his reasons, that he at last gave him the desired permission. He immediately made all the necessary preparations for his departure, but once more ascended the pulpit of his Episcopal Church, and in a last discourse took leave of all the assembled faithful, as also of all the other churches, hospitals and asylums of the city. To those who had frequently complained of his sermons because he unhesitatingly denounced their vices, he said: "Now joyfully clap your hands and cry that the bad, talkative tongue will cease to strike you; yes, it will cease; but the hand still remains, and pen and ink must in future sustain the combat." Finally, he admonished them all to lead a Christian life, and concluded his sermon with these words: "I exhort you, my dear children, to keep my instructions in your hearts. May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, remain with you all. Amen!"

How deeply affected all his hearers were, was plainly perceived by their tears and their emotion. Well had they reason

to be grieved, for they had possessed in St. Gregory a most tender father for their needy widows and orphans, an invincible protector of their faith, a teacher whom God had gifted with unusual wisdom, a careful, never weary pastor, and a most perfect model of all virtue. They tried in every possible way to prevent his leaving, but he was not to be persuaded to change his resolution, but went on board the ship, which was ready to set sail, and returned to his home. On his arrival, he settled himself upon his parental estate, Arianzum, with the intention of there passing the remainder of his life in solitude, and in the exercise of virtue.

This intention he carried out, and prayers and devout meditation were his greatest comfort, until, failing health owing to excessive labor, besides old age and sickness, kept him for the greater part of the time in bed. Sometimes, however, he took the pen in hand and wrote several works to confute the doctrine of the heretics, and to strengthen and confirm the Catholics. God permitted that the holy man, who had lived until now so pious and pure a life, should endure most fearful temptations from the Evil One. Constant calling on God, austere fasting, prayers, reading devout books and severe study, were the weapons he used against the enemy of man, and he always conquered. The Most High also permitted that some men, envious and devoid of conscience, should calumniate the Saint everywhere, and even falsely accuse him of some great crimes to the Bishop of Tianeæ. The holy man was not angry, but, while defending his honor, prayed God to bestow His grace upon his enemies and to pardon them. Omitting much that might still be related of this Saint, I will only mention one instance of his solicitude to avoid sin and to do penance. He thought that he had spoken in a certain affair more than was necessary, and punished himself by remaining forty days without uttering a single word to any one.

At length he expired happily, in the 90th year of his age, having labored and suffered much for the honor of the Almighty and the protection of the true church.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Gregory punished himself for a trifling fault which he had committed in speaking, by remaining forty days without uttering a single word. You perhaps daily commit many more and much greater faults in speaking. You may have</p>	<p>a habit of indulging in the vices of lying, swearing, slandering, &c. Although you confess these sins, you do not reform. Perhaps you even excuse them, as "only a habit." But do you suppose that this excuse will one day justify you before God?</p>
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Do not deceive yourself, because it is already too horrible that you possess such evil habits. I am certain that if your neighbors were daily to abuse and vilify you, with the excuse that it was only a habit, you would not be pleased. Again, you ought to know that a man, who has a bad habit, is in duty bound to use every means to correct it, as otherwise he lives in continual sin. The most effective means to be used are, that you punish yourself for the wrong you have done during the day. At night, before you lie down, reflect how often you have done wrong in one point or another, repent of your faults, and pray God to forgive you. Impose on yourself a penance. Recite, for instance, as many Ave Marias or repentantly beat your breast as often as you have done wrong, and make good resolutions to be more guarded on the following day. Use these means, and you will soon become convinced of their efficacy.

II. St. Gregory resigned his Episcopal See that peace and unity might remain among the bishops, and that he might not be the occasion of strife and contention. A true Christian, whose distinguishing feature ought to be charity, will always endeavor to preserve peace and unity. Strife and contention ought to be far from him, because they occasion many and great evils. "Refrain from strife, and thou shalt diminish thy sins" Eccles. (xxviii.). You will

prevent others also from many sins "Whoever loves contention," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "destroys brotherly love and occasions hatred and enmity." Hence St. Paul writes: "The servant of the Lord must not wrangle" (II. Timothy ii.). It depends entirely on our own self-control; on our conquering the anger which incites us to contention. Should, however, another provoke a quarrel, we must not meet him with unkind, but with mild words; for the teaching of the Holy Ghost is true: "A mild answer breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury" (Prov. xv.).

The most effectual means for this is to avoid an angry man, or to listen quietly to his words, and answer nothing. If you insist on being in the right, or desire to have the last word, like the other; if you do not restrain your tongue, but meet him with invectives, his anger will increase, and the quarrel will not soon terminate. "Oppose the anger of your neighbor, if you are able," writes St. Ambrose; "but if you are not able so to do, yield and give way: for it is written: 'Avoid those in anger' Jacob yielded to his angry brother and therefore found great grace with God." And St. Chrysostom writes: "It is far easier to subdue and conquer an angry person by silence and yielding, than by answering." Implant this instruction deeply in your heart, and regulate your conduct accordingly.

TENTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. ANTONINUS, ARCHBISHOP OF FLORENCE, AND ST. DUNSTAN, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

The celebrated St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, was born in 1389, in the city of that name. He was the only son of very pious parents, and hence was educated with great solicitude. In baptism he received the name of Antony, but on account of the smallness of his stature, he was called Antoninus or little Antony. In childhood he was so pious that he was entitled the little Saint. He never left the house except to go to school or to Church. In the latter he was always found kneeling, generally before the statue of the blessed Virgin, to whom he was deeply devoted, and to whom he ascribes the grace he received from God to lead a pure life. He early desired to enter the Order of the Dominicans, but the prior, on account of his youth and great delicacy of health, hesitated to admit him, yet did not wish to hurt him by a refusal. He told him, that when he had learned by heart the Ecclesiastical Law, which he studied at that time, he should present himself again, and he would be admitted. After the lapse of a year, Antoninus returned, saying, that he had studied his task and hoped now to receive the habit. The Father Provincial could hardly credit the assertion of Antoninus, examined him, and found that he had indeed spoken the truth and knew the whole Canonical Law by heart. As this was a convincing proof not only of the ability of the youth, but also of his divine vocation, he was gladly received into the Order.

Antoninus soon became a most perfect model of virtue. He was always the first and the last in the choir, and passed the greater part of the night in prayer and devout reading, only when sick did he partake of meat. His bed was a board, and not until he was far advanced in years did he sleep upon a straw mattress. He never divested himself of his garment of hair cloth, and although his constitution was weak and sickly, he never relaxed in his austerity towards himself, not even when he had become Archbishop. While still very young, he was appointed, on account of his great ability and virtues, Prior of several monasteries, and later he presided over the Roman and Neapolitan Provinces as provincial, until he was chosen by the Pope Archbishop of Florence. The Saint was deeply grieved when he heard the news, and seeking to flee, he was seized and taken to Siena. He used all possible means to

avoid this dignity, but he was obliged to obey, as the Pope threatened him with excommunication. Hence it was with weeping eyes that he received the Episcopal consecration; praying to God: "Lord, it is known to thee how unwillingly I take this burden upon myself. As I am, however, compelled to obey Thy Vicar, I pray Thee to rule me also, that I may conform my life to Thy holy will, and do all that Thou demandest of me." He commenced his new functions by the regulation of his residence, which wore the appearance of a cloister rather than that of the palace of a bishop. His household consisted of eight persons, to whom he gave large salaries, while he himself lived no better than he had done in the convent; No mendicant was sent from his door without alms, and he also founded an institution where those might receive aid who were ashamed to beg. His private income he used for the indigent, as he said that it did not belong to him but to the poor. One day, walking through the city, he saw many angels upon the roof of a poor little house. Going into it, he found a respectable widow with three daughters, who lived by the labor of their hands, but who earned scarcely enough to clothe themselves decently and who, often had nothing to eat. The Saint not only gave them liberal alms, but thereafter came frequently to their relief. It happened, however, that after a considerable time the Saint, when passing the same house, instead of angels, saw devils upon the roof, who seemed to enjoy themselves greatly. He went in and saw mother and daughters not occupied with works, but with visitors and frivolous amusements. He likewise found divers books which served to entertain them. The Saint, from this, easily concluded what the apparition signified. He reprimanded them severely, and admonishing them to return to their former industry, was in future, more circumspect in distributing his charities. Kind as the holy bishop was to the poor, he was also watchful and unwearied in the duties which his functions imposed upon him. Every moment left to him from his prayers and his short rest he devoted to them. He preached sometimes in one place, sometimes in another; and suffered no irreverence, no indecorously arrayed women in the church. Many prevailing abuses, among others playing at dice, he abolished altogether. He lent a most patient ear to the complaints and demands of those under him. Every one had access to him, and no one left him un comforted. His zeal to keep his flock constant in their faith was truly heroic. He was one day exhorted to relax somewhat in his labors lest his health should suffer. "Prelates of the Church," replied he; "must not think of themselves but of the welfare of those in their charge." Being at length exhausted from work, he was seized by a slow

fever in the 70th year of his age. Feeling that his end was approaching he divided all he had among the poor, so that when the expenses of his funeral were paid, four ducats were all that was left. Having most devoutly received the holy sacraments, he suddenly cried aloud: "To serve God is to reign." Some of the Canons read a part of the daily prayers of the Church, and the Saint responded as well as he could. At length, kissing and pressing the image of the crucified Christ most fervently to his breast, he expired on the night of Ascension Day, in the year of our Lord 1459. The Almighty had bestowed upon him the gift of prophecy and also the power to restore the sick, and to cleanse man and dwellings from evil spirits. To a surgeon, who one day complained to him that his house was greatly disturbed by evil spirits, the Saint replied that a certain superstitious book which he kept was the cause of it, and advised him to burn it; this was done and all disturbance ceased. Pope Pius II., who was in Florence at the time of the Saint's death, attended his funeral; and Nicholas V. hesitated not to say that he believed St. Antoninus had as well deserved to be counted among the Saints during his life, as others whom he had solemnly canonized after their death: so great was the estimation in which the bishop was held while he lived.



Not less venerated in England was St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury: not only on account of his virtues but also because of the gifts of prophecy and miracles with which God had graced him. He was born in England, and was no sooner able to use his reason, than he became devoted to prayer, to reading pious books, and to studying the liberal arts. Athelmus, his uncle, observed in him, as he grew up, well-founded virtues, great erudition, and an uncommon ability for every kind of business. He, therefore, took him to the court of King Athelstan, hoping that Dunstan would not only make his fortune there, but also be the means of doing much good. The King soon had sufficient proofs of Dunstan's piety and intelligence, and hence favored him before all others. This, however, caused jealousy among the other courtiers, whose inclinations differed widely from his, and they calumniated him to such an extent to the King, that he fell into disgrace and was finally obliged to leave the court. The experience which Dunstan thus had of the instability of all earthly favors and honors, disgusted him with the world, and he therefore entered a monastery, desiring to serve God with his whole heart.

Several years later, Edmund, Athelstan's successor upon the throne, almost forced him by his entreaties to return to the court,

and make his home there, to assist the king with his advice. But this lasted only a short time, as this king also, persuaded by the Saint's enemies, banished him from his presence. Edmund, however, soon came to the knowledge of the wrong he had done to Dunstan, asked his pardon, and, for his own benefit, received him again into favor. After the king's death, the Saint returned to the cloister he had built, and there lived a peaceful and holy life. When, however, Edwin came to the throne, and Dunstan heard that, besides other vices, his immoralities scandalized the whole nation, the Saint, desiring to prevent these offences to God, went to the king, after having by long prayers supplicated the Almighty to aid him. Mildly reprimanding him for the wrong he was committing, he endeavored to move him to repentance, by reminding him of eternal punishment. But two vile companions of the King, who never left him, not only prevented the exhortations of Dunstan from having any effect, but instigated the blinded king to order him to quit the country immediately. Dunstan obeyed, and went to Flanders, remaining at Ghent until it should please the Almighty to dispose of him elsewhere. During his voyage, St. Andrew, to whom he had a particular devotion, appeared to him and comforted him with the assurance that his banishment would not last long. The truth of these words the Saint soon experienced, as Edgar, a brother of Edwin, who, after the death of the latter, came to the throne, recalled him, convinced that he had been unjustly dealt with. He first gave him the See of Worcester, then transferred him to that of London, and finally, appointed him Archbishop of Canterbury, and took his advice in all important affairs.

St. Dunstan was not elated by the high dignity conferred upon him, but endeavored to fulfil the duties of his station. He was zealous for the honor of God, and the welfare of his flock, and left no means untried to restore among all classes purity of morals. Having heard that several of the Canons did not lead a chaste and irreproachable life, he labored with all the power he possessed to reform them. He used kindness, exhortations and threats; but when he perceived that it was all of no avail, he deprived those who were incorrigible of their dignities, withdrew their income, expelled them from the choir, and filled their places with other pious religious. They who were thus expelled found at court many and powerful protectors, who tried to persuade the holy Archbishop at least to leave them their income. The king himself, pitying them, took their part. The Saint almost began to waver, and consider what was best for him to do. But while he, deep in his heart, asked the advice of the Almighty, these words proceeded from a crucifix standing before him: "Thou

must not do it. Thy judgment has been just. To reverse it would be wrong." Still more marvellous is the following event in the Saint's life. The king, who otherwise was a good man, saw, in visiting the convent at Wilton, a young and noble lady of uncommon beauty, and invited her to Court, where he violated her person. The whole city was scandalized by this crime. Dunstan repaired to court to reprove the king and exhort him to do penance. The king seized the hand of the prelate to kiss it, but the Saint drawing it back, said that he must first wipe the tears which the innocent maiden had shed upon his hand before he dared to touch that of a consecrated bishop. Upon this he represented to him the crime he had committed in such forcible language, that the king, bitterly weeping, sank at the bishop's feet, willing to do any penance that might be required of him. The Saint gave him a penance which the king performed to the edification of the whole kingdom.

We pass in silence many other events which are to be found in the history of this Saint, to add a few words concerning his happy death.

On the feast of the Ascension of Christ, the holy archbishop meditated upon Christ's entering heaven, which was to form the subject of his sermon, when he suddenly perceived a great many angels, clothed in white, with golden crowns upon their heads. They called on him to ask if he was ready to accompany them and be present at the festival in heaven. The Saint, although rejoiced at the invitation, excused himself by saying that he had to preach to his flock and exhort them to live in such a manner, that they also might one day go to heaven. The seraphic messengers satisfied with this reply, asked him if he would be ready to sing with them the praise of the Lord on the succeeding Saturday. The Saint joyfully consented, and expiring the following Saturday, he went to heaven, to which he had been so kindly invited, in the 70th year of his age, and in the year of our Lord, 1008.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Dunstan is invited to eternal glory by heavenly spirits robed in white with golden crowns upon their heads. Why? Because he lived chastely from his youth until his death. He always abhorred the vice of impurity, and endeavored to uproot it in others, for which reason he had much to</p>	<p>suffer from the world. Will you also one day be invited or admitted to the heavenly glory? Ask your conduct and you will have the answer. Holy writ informs us repeatedly that the impure shall have no part in the kingdom of heaven: it says distinctly, that their dwelling-place shall be in hell. If you, therefore,</p>
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belong to their number you may easily conclude where you will be. Think, therefore, to what end your impurity will come, and consider if you act sensibly to rob yourself, on account of such short and abominable voluptuousness, of the eternal joys of heaven, and to cast yourself into the never-ending torments of hell. If this thought is not able to reform you, hear what St. Peter Damian says of those addicted to this vice: "Let the lewd live after the desires of their body, that soul and body may go to destruction; that they may taste the gall and wormwood of eternal pains."

II. St. Antoninus allowed no irreverence, no indecorously-dressed women in Church. In both these points he acted rightly; for those who are disrespectful in Church, and those who go there immodestly dressed, give evidence that they either do not believe in the God who is present there, or that, instead of reverencing his supreme Majesty, they rather despise him. As far as the first point is concerned, Christian reader, I exhort you to think whither you are going, before whom you will appear, and why you are going, when you enter a Church. Understand it well. You are entering the house of the Great God. You, as a miserable sinner, appear before God as before your Judge. You, as a poor, needy beggar, appear before God, as before the richest and most liberal of all monarchs. You, as a being created to serve God, appear before Him as before your Lord, who is at the same time, Ruler of heaven and earth. You, as a servant, desire to honor your Master, to ask for His graces as an alms, and to beg that your misdeeds may be forgiven.

In regard to the second point, may all those whom it concerns be assured that they commit great sin by their frivolous way of dressing

themselves. They give occasion to offences against the Majesty of God, in the very place where every one ought to honor Him with all the power of his soul. How great a wickedness! Even dresses which are not indecorous, but too elaborate, are not suitable for a human being who appears before God, as a miserable sinner before his judge, or a poor beggar before a great Lord. Listen to what St. Chrysostom said to a vainly dressed woman: "What! are you going to dance in church, and to present yourself before the eyes of men, or to pray God to forgive your sins, and to appease the wrath of your Judge? What need have you to dress yourself so frivolously and with such care? Those are not garments for a beggar," for one who prays for grace and pardon. "How can you seriously repent of your sins, or pray with devotion, if you appear in such an array? Even if you should shed tears during your prayers, you would rather incite others to laughter than edify them. Away with such indecent ornaments."

Have you observed in the life of St. Antoninus, where the evil spirits delight to dwell, and with what persons they enjoy themselves? In those houses, where people amuse themselves by reading frivolous, immoral, superstitious, slanderous, or other wicked books; where they entertain themselves with sinful gambling and idle company, with laughing and jesting, with impure conversations and songs, or with other such like entertainments; with those who waste the priceless time in the above-named loose manner, there Evil Spirits delight to dwell, there they enjoy themselves. On the contrary, the holy angels love to dwell with those who avoid all such things, who occupy themselves according to their station, and who live a pure life. Judge

now, whether the evil spirits or the holy angels visit you and your house. If you have a forbidden book in your house, throw it into the fire. Are you addicted to gaming and entertaining vain company; do you spend your time in idleness or unchaste conversations? Reform; otherwise you may rest assured that you prepare a pleasure for the devil. Evil spirits are with you and around

you. Endeavor to work according to your station, and to avoid the above-mentioned errors, and you will prepare a joy for the angels: they are with you, and will assist you in your need. "The angels and archangels delight in our industry and our work," says St. Ephrem, "as the devils, on the contrary, rejoice on perceiving that we are indolent and lazy."

ELEVENTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. ISIDORE, HUSBANDMAN.

The true Church presents to us, in Isidore, a Saint who was born in a station in life, considered by the world low, and held in as contempt; which shows plainly that in such a station one can easily become a Saint as in any other, perhaps even more easily. He was only a plain tiller of the ground. His native place was Madrid in Spain, and his parents were poor but pious people. They were greatly devoted to St. Isidore, formerly Archbishop of Seville, hence they named their little son after him. As soon as Isidore was capable of understanding anything, his parents taught him to pray: and they observed with pleasure, that of his own free will he never neglected his prayers either morning or evening. As he grew up, he did not let a day pass without attending Holy Mass with the deepest reverence. The remaining time he spent under his parents' direction in labor, which he offered devoutly both mornings and evenings to the Almighty. When he became older and stronger, he hired himself to a citizen of Madrid, named John Virgaš, who employed him in tilling a farm. But it mattered not how hard Isidore's labor was, he never was displeased with it, but on the contrary always performed it with pleasure and cheerfulness, because he recognized that God had intended him for that vocation. He, however, always heard Mass before he went to his daily task, and was in every thing, faithful, obedient, industrious and careful.

Some other field-laborers soon began to hate him, because he refused to join them in acts that were not allowed. Accordingly, they went to his master and accused him of coming so late to his work, that he defrauded him of a considerable portion of his time.

The master himself went into the field and saw that Isidore really did begin to work later than all the others. Going towards him with the intention of reproving him, he observed that beside Isidore's plough were two yoke of white oxen driven by two distinguished looking youths. Virgas presumed that Isidore had hired them to make up for the time he had lost by his tardiness. As he came nearer, both youths and oxen vanished. Greatly surprised, he asked Isidore in a serious tone of voice what men and oxen had labored with him. Isidore replied: "I have called no man's aid, neither have I seen any one. I pray daily to my God to be my helper and to bless my labors. To my guardian angel I commend myself and my work." Virgas concluded from this that Isidore stood in great favor with God, and that he did not neglect his work by his prayers, because holy angels deigned to fill his place. Hence he encouraged him to persevere in his piety because he hoped that by it, God's blessing would descend on his fields. And in truth the ground cultivated by Isidore produced more and better fruit than any other.

Once, while Isidore was at Mass, a boy came running to him, and said that he must come quickly as a wolf was pursuing his oxen. The Saint replied: "Go in peace, my child! the will of the Lord be done." After Mass, he found the wolf lying dead beside the oxen; but the latter were unharmed. In other similar circumstances, Isidore experienced the protection of heaven, and he therefore, in all that concerned him, turned to God for refuge in prayer. During his work he continually made use of pious ejaculations or short prayers which he had learned by heart. An oath, or even an invective, or an indecorous word, which others utter hundreds of times when at labor, was never heard to pass his lips. Nor was he ever seen associating with those whose conduct was loose or frivolous, nor at places of idle or dangerous amusements, as dances, gaming tables, &c. He was an enemy of all conversations or songs that had even a shadow of impurity, and he never permitted any such in his presence. All the leisure time his work left him he spent in prayer and devout reading. The holy sacrament he received with the greatest devotion as often as his confessor permitted. In this manner Isidore preserved his chastity while unmarried, and kept the innocence which he had received at holy baptism inviolate through his whole life. Persuaded by his master, he married a very pious virgin, but after God had given them a son, he lived, with the consent of his wife, in continency until the end of his days. His wife, animated by his example, also led so virtuous a life that she, too, died in the odor of sanctity.

Whether single or married, Isidore showed the greatest

compassion towards the needy, and God more than once wrought a miracle to enable the Saint to assist them according to the desire of his heart. One Saturday, when Isidore had given away all he possessed still another poor person came asking alms. Although he knew that he himself had emptied the cupboard, he said to his wife: "Go, and see if there is anything more that we could give." The woman went and saw with great astonishment that the cupboard which had been emptied, was filled up to the top with provisions. At another time, it was observed that wheat and other grain multiplied under his hands while he divided them among the poor. He was, however, just as severe to himself as he was kind and compassionate to the poor. Although, on account of his heavy labor he was not obliged to fast, still he not only observed most strictly, all the fast-days prescribed by the Church, but added many to them of his own free will, not to mention other penances with which he mortified his body. At last he became sick, and as the day of his death was revealed to him by the Almighty, he prepared himself most piously for it. He received the holy Sacrament with such fervor, that they who were present could not restrain their tears. He employed his last hours in acts of sublime virtue, and consigned his soul, adorned with many graces and merits, into the hands of his Creator in the year 1130.

When his body was disinterred, after having been buried for forty years in the common churchyard, it was found free from corruption, and was removed with great solemnity, to the Church of St. Andrew. During this ceremony the bells of all the churches in the city tolled without their being touched by any one. The miracles with which God honored the Saint at this and at a subsequent removal of his body in the year 1620, as also those which were wrought at his shrine on different sick persons, among whom were many of royal blood, are almost countless. During his life he wrought many miracles besides those mentioned above. Among others, it is said, that one day, his master when in the field suffered greatly from thirst, and asked Isidore if no well was near. The Saint indicated a place to him and said: "There is a well." His master going to the place, found nothing but a dry rock. He believed that his servant had only mocked him; but Isidore touching the rock with his staff, there immediately gushed forth a stream of clear water from it. He even raised his master's daughter from the dead.

To this day this Saint is honored throughout the whole kingdom of Spain as the patron saint of the land. It may be said that no monarch on the face of the earth ever received such

distinguished honors as were paid to this holy husbandman when his body was removed. It is still to be seen incorrupt, in a silver shrine richly ornamented with precious stones, which the jewellers of Madrid made at their own expense, and valued at 16,000 ducats.

Saint Isidore, together with Saint Ignatius, Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Philip Neri and Saint Terèsa, was solemnly canonized in the year 1612 by Pope Gregory XV.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Isidore, a poor husbandman, becomes a Saint in his station of life. Why do we not become Saints in ours? He became a Saint by avoiding sin, by the exercise of good works, by patience in his troubles and labors, by suffering persecutions and by keeping the commandments of God and the Church. Can we not, by the Grace of the Almighty, shun sin as well as he? be patient in suffering, in trials and labor? keep the commandments of God and the Church as he did? Why should we not determine from to-day to conduct ourselves as he did? It contributed much to St. Isidore's holiness, that although his station in life is considered low in the eyes of the world, he was content with it, and he performed with fervor his morning and evening prayer, was present at Holy Mass daily, often received the Holy Sacraments, avoided bad company, commenced his work with God, offered it to him and performed it with uncomplaining diligence and fidelity. But are not all these points in which you may exercise yourself just as well as St. Isidore did? Consider these points one after another, and say if any one of them seems too difficult or impossible for you. You can, therefore, have no excuse before God, if, whatever your station may be, you do not become a Saint, and obtain everlasting life. The Almighty on His part has left nothing undone. He

has given you in your station the grace to do all that Isidore did in his. It only depends on your earnest co-operation with the Divine grace.

II. Never was a curse heard to pass the lips of St. Isidore. This is saying much of a man of his station, and occupied as he was. To curse is, in our day, unhappily a very common vice, particularly among certain classes of men. But common as this vice is, it is not less abominable in the sight of God, and unworthy of those who profess themselves Christians. Some, in their work, curse inanimate objects, animals and men. With many it becomes a habit, and thus they use the language of Hell. How dreadful will be the responsibility of these people before the judgment seat of God, since Christ has assured us that we must one day render an account of every idle word!

Many excuse themselves and say, "It was spoken in anger—I was not in earnest—I did not mean what I said." Parents will plead the obstinacy of their children. They will say: "They are not obedient and will not mind milder words. Their conduct is such, and they are so wilful, that one is forced to curse." What shallow excuses these are! Anger does not excuse your cursing; for you, as a Christian, should control and repress your anger. If your curses are not

spoken in earnest, if you do not mean what you say, still, to curse is both wicked and sinful. That children will not obey without hearing curses is not at all true. Thousands of children obey without hearing them. When it is true of some children, it is the fault of the parents who have accustomed them to such language. But if it is true that they will only obey when cursed, still to curse is not permitted, because it is a sin. It is never allowed to commit sin, no matter how much good may be obtained by doing so. That many children obey neither words nor punishment, and that they are stubborn and wicked, I am ready to believe; but I also believe that in many cases this is the fault of their parents who have either not brought them up better, or because they have cursed them. Experience tells us that children when so often cursed by their parents, generally

become stubborn, hardened and wicked. To curse is surely not the means of making them pious and good. Consequently, the saying of some that one must curse is vicious and false. No Christian should dare say so, because it is equivalent to saying, we must commit sin; we must offend God; we must transgress the commandments of the Lord. But is it not blasphemy to speak thus? I say: we must not curse, however bad the children are. Whoever is accustomed to cursing must endeavor to break himself of the habit, as otherwise he will have a heavy judgment, and may expect severe punishment. Holy writ says: "They who curse shall perish." "Curse not" says the Apostle. (Romans, xii.)

NOTE. See the life of St. Francis of Hieronymo in the Appendix at the end of Vol. II.

TWELFTH DAY OF MAY.

STS. NEREUS, ACHILLEUS AND DOMITILLA, MARTYRS, AND ST.
PANCRATIUS, MARTYR.

Nereus and Achilleus, two brothers, who in their youth had been baptised by the holy Apostle Peter, were servants of Flavia Domitilla, first cousin of the Emperor Domitian. They had, by their pious life and persuasions, converted Domitilla to the Christian faith; but this had been done in silence and secrecy. Aurelian, one of the most eminent of the young noblemen in Rome, chose Domitilla for his bride, and she betrothed herself to him, perhaps only with the intention of gaining him over to Christianity. One day, as she, expecting her intended, was adorning herself with great care in order to please him, both her chamberlains became sad, and one of them, with deep sighs, said: "O Domitilla! if you were as assiduous in adorning your soul to please the heavenly spouse, who is willing to be united to you, as you are to adorn your body out of love of your earthly bridegroom, how happy

would you be !” Both now represented to her the priceless treasure of virginity, the felicity of that soul which has Christ for its spouse, and the difference between what we may expect from an earthly and from a heavenly bridegroom. Domitilla was at first indignant at this speech, but afterwards, when she had listened more quietly, the grace of the Lord worked so mightily in her heart, that, filled with love for the heavenly spouse, she exclaimed : “Why did you not tell me this before? If I had known earlier what you now tell me, I would have chosen no other than the heavenly bridegroom. But I can do it still, and I am willing so to do. Only assist me that I may soon be united to Him.”

The two pious chamberlains joyfully imparted the resolution of Domitilla to Pope Clement, who thus spoke to her : “My dear daughter, I praise your desire, and your intention. But have you rightly considered the struggle which awaits you if by consecrating your virginity to Christ, you take Him as your spouse? and do not keep your promise to Aurelian. Have you sufficient fortitude for it? Will you be able to endure the suffering which will come upon you?” Domitilla replied unhesitatingly “I rely upon the grace of my heavenly bridegroom in Him I trust; He will not forsake me.”

Having said this, she took, in the presence of the Pope, the vow of chastity, and received from his hands the veil, as was already the custom at that remote period.

Aurelian, when informed of it, became almost wild with rage, but at first tried to change Domitilla’s purpose by flatteries and caresses. As he, however, could not prevail upon her, he had all those imprisoned who, he supposed, had taken part in Domitilla’s action. The first that were seized were Nereus and Achilleus. They were denounced as Christians, and as they fearlessly professed their faith, they were banished, with St. Domitilla to the Island of Portia, where they had to suffer great misery. Minutius Rufus, the prefect, endeavored to force them by repeated scourgings and other tortures, to sacrifice to the idols. But they fearlessly said : “We have been baptized by the holy Apostle Peter, and, therefore, cannot worship idols.” When the prefect saw that he had no power over Nereus and Achilleus, he condemned them to be beheaded, and ordered Domitilla to be tortured again in various ways. As she, however, remained steadfast in her confession, Aurelian had recourse to other means. He sent to her two noble maidens, Euphrosyne and Theodora, who had been reared with her in paganism, under pretext of waiting upon her, but in reality to endeavor to awaken her former love for him. Both did their utmost. They praised matrimony and the beauty and wealth of Aurelian beyond everything, scorn-

ed and derided a single life, &c. Domitilla, however, instead of being influenced by their words, converted both pagans, who not only resolved to embrace Christianity, but also, to dedicate their virginity to Christ, and take Him as their spouse.

Being informed of this, Aurelian was so beside himself with rage, that he knew not what to do, until at last he resolved to make one more effort. He caused Domitilla to be brought to Terracina, with the intention of marrying her forcibly. He ordered a splendid banquet to be prepared, to which the greatest of the nobility were invited. Domitilla had also to appear. When after the repast was over, Aurelian began to dance with joy, being sure that he had gained his end, Domitilla went, unperceived, into another apartment, and thus prayed to God from her inmost heart. "Now, O Lord! has the time of utmost danger come, in which I need Thy help in order that I may not become faithless to Thee." While the chaste virgin thus prayed, and Aurelian enjoyed himself by dancing, he sank suddenly lifeless to the ground. Domitilla, departing immediately with her companions, gave thanks to God who had so miraculously saved her.

Luxarius, however, the brother of Aurelian, accused Domitilla of having by magic, caused his brother's death, and demanded from the emperor the permission to revenge himself on her. Having easily received this, he set fire to the house where the chaste virgin dwelt with her two companions, and burnt it to ashes. The bodies of the three holy maidens were found, lying prostrate, with their faces to the ground, but not a hair of their heads was singed by the flames.



To the three holy martyrs above mentioned the Roman Martyrology adds a boy fourteen years old named Pancratius. He was born in Phrygia, and was the son of wealthy parents, but early became an orphan. Cledonius, his father, had stood high in the favor of the Emperor Dioclesian on account of the many valuable military services he had rendered him; in recompense for which he had received from the Emperor a large estate at Rome on the Celian hill. On his deathbed Cledonius called his brother to him, and most warmly recommended Pancratius at that time but a small child, to his care, praying him to take the utmost pains with his education, and also to administer faithfully the rich inheritance that would come into his possession. Dionysius,—this was the name of the brother—took the little boy with pleasure to his home and treated him as if he had been his own child. After some years, Dionysius went with his family to Rome, that he

might be better able to administer the estate of the young Pancratius and attend better to his education. At that period there raged at Rome the most horrible persecution of the Christians, of whom many thousands were executed in the most cruel manner. The Pope kept himself concealed in the same street in which dwelt Dionysius and Pancratius. As Dionysius had heard much even from the pagans concerning the holiness of this man, and as he saw with his own eyes, how constant the Christians were in the confession of their faith, and how firmly they bore the most cruel martyrdom, the thought came into his mind that in truth the Christian faith must be divine, and the only one leading to salvation. This thought he communicated to Pancratius, whose mind was far in advance of his years. Both became eager to know in what this faith consisted. At their request, therefore, they were brought by a Christian to the holy Pope, whom they humbly begged to instruct them in the Christian faith. The Pope joyfully consented to their wish, and so clearly represented to them the falsity of the heathen gods and the truth of the Christian faith, that both, after an instruction of twenty days, determined to receive holy baptism which was accordingly administered to them.

The joy that filled their hearts is not to be described, while at the same time their zeal to give their lives, after the example of so many Christians, for Christ's sake, was so fervent that they desired to present themselves to the Emperor, and in his presence to profess Christianity. To this, however, the holy Pope would not give his consent. They, therefore, determined to lead a truly Christian life. They employed their wealth in assisting the suffering and persecuted Christians, and by their kind persuasion they brought many heathens to the knowledge and reception of the Christian faith. Dionysius, shortly after, received his reward from God. He was taken sick, and before he had lived a year in the practice of the Christian faith, he died calmly and happily.

Before his death, he exhorted Pancratius to remain steadfast in the newly accepted faith, and rather to suffer the most cruel death than to forsake it. Pancratius promised faithfully to follow this admonition, and the sequel will show how well he kept his word. When he was fourteen years old those who were always spying out the Christians, accused him to the Emperor as a despiser of the idols. Diocletian had him brought before him, and addressed him most kindly. "My child;" said he, "I have been informed that you have been seduced by the Christians. I advise you to renounce your error, and again to sacrifice to our gods, that you may not die so young. I know that you have not yet reached the age of fifteen. Your father was my beloved friend, and out of regard to

him I will adopt you as my son. Should you, however, not follow my counsel, you have nothing to expect but death."

Pancratius fearlessly replied: "You are mistaken, Emperor, if you suppose that I have been seduced by the Christians. Your gods have been seducers and imposters. If one of your servants should be guilty of the deeds your gods committed, you would not allow him to be in your presence, but would severely punish him. How can I then honor them as gods? It is true that I am young in years, but my dear Jesus has so strengthened my heart and soul that I fear not your menaces." This and more Pancratius said without exhibiting the least signs of fear. The Emperor, fearing to make himself despicable by torturing a child, commanded that he should be led to a place called Aurelia and be decapitated.

The holy youth rejoiced and gave thanks to God for having vouchsafed him the grace to die for His sake. He went with a cheerful face to the place of execution and ended his life fearlessly by the sword. Octavilla, a noble Christian matron, had the holy body taken away secretly at night and buried it with great honor in the year of our Lord 302. St. Gregory of Tours writes that it was still in his time the custom to bring those who were to make an oath to the grave of the Saint, and if any one dared to perjure himself by a false oath, he either suddenly died, or became possessed by the devil, and was most horribly tormented.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Pancratius and Dionysius converted many heathens by their kind persuasions. Nereus and Achilleus, the servants of Domitilla, induced the latter to embrace Christianity and to preserve her virginity. How much good can a man often do to others? How much evil can he often prevent? How often a servant can influence those with whom he is living? If you have an opportunity by kind words to prevent others from doing wrong, or to incite them to a good action, do not neglect it; for by this means, you may lead others to heaven, and they will most assuredly, one day, thank you for it most warmly. Be careful, however, that you do not

deter another from doing a good deed, or perhaps, incite him to do evil: for this would lead him to hell, and he will surely curse you for it through all eternity. In like manner, if you are at service, you may have an opportunity to persuade your master or mistress to do good, or prevent them from sin. But especially beware that you never advise what is sinful, or that, to please them, you do not call good what is evil, or that you do not hinder them from doing good. Much less allow yourself to be used as a tool for wickedness, which, unhappily, many godless servants do, either to gain money, or the favor of their master or mistress. If

those in whose service you are, request anything of you which is sinful, or that you assist them in doing evil, whatever it may be, remember that you owe more obedience to God than to man, and that the fear and displeasure of the Almighty must be of more weight to you than the fear and displeasure of your master and mistress, or indeed of the whole world. Hence, never obey your master or mistress in such circumstances, even if they should send you out of their house on account of it, or if you should suffer other temporal losses. The spiritual, the eternal loss is much more to be feared than the temporal; and the debarring you from heaven more than the sending you away from a dwelling upon earth.

II. "How happy would you be if you were as assiduous in adorning your soul as you are in adorning your body;" said the holy servants to Domitilla. And I say to you; how happy would you—who read this—be, if you employed half the time for the salvation of your soul that you give to the well-being of your body? And why do you not do it? St. Bernard asks this. Answer him if you can. "Miserable man," says he; "thou watchest, and carest and worriest thyself to nourish and clothe thy wretched body; why dost thou not trouble thyself and labor to give to thy soul food and raiment?" This means, why have you not your salvation more at heart? Do you care less for the salvation of your priceless soul than for the well-being of your body? Or, do you dare to justify yourself before God, for neglecting

the salvation of your soul, because your thoughts were constantly occupied by the preservation and pleasure of your body? Listen to the question of St. Chrysostom: "How shall we justify ourselves when we care so much for the body and neglect the soul?" Do you believe that it is sufficient, and that you have done your duty, when you have employed all your time for the good of your body so that it may not suffer? This would be a most deplorable blindness; for, what the above mentioned holy teacher says is surely true: "If we neglect our soul, we cannot save our body, as the soul was not created for the body, but the body for the soul." By neglecting our soul, we not only make it unhappy, but the body also, for all eternity. Be, therefore, anxious for the salvation of your soul, and remember that upon it depends the well-being of your body. The soul is the most noble part of man; hence we ought to be much more concerned about it than about the body. "It is the greatest error," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "that as man consists of two parts, one of which is so much more noble than the other, yet in general, he bestows more care upon the ignoble part, namely, the body, than upon the nobler, namely, the soul." "Let us bestow the utmost care upon our soul," admonishes St. Chrysostom; "for, this will prove advantageous to our body, which otherwise will go to destruction with our soul." "Let us love our soul more than our body;" says St. Augustine. .

THIRTEENTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. SERVATIUS, BISHOP, ST. JOHN THE SILENT, AND ST. PETER REGALATI,
CONFESSOR.

St. Servatius was born, in the beginning of the fourth century, of noble parents. Educated according to his rank, he became so celebrated on account of his virtue and learning, that he was deemed worthy of becoming bishop of Tongres. He manifested in his sacred functions an unwearied fervor, and passed many a day without tasting either food or drink. In all affairs, either public or private, he sought advice in prayer. His zeal to maintain the true faith pure among his flock was truly apostolic, as the church at that period was severely attacked by divers heresies. In protecting the holy religion, he evinced undaunted courage, he heeded no persecution, nor danger to his own life. At several councils, held to maintain the Catholic Church and to uproot heresy, he was present with much benefit. He brought many heretics back again into the pale of the true Church, at which he greatly rejoiced, giving most fervent thanks to the Almighty. He was much distressed at the invasion of the blood-thirsty Huns into Germany, as these savages treated the Catholics most cruelly. When told that they were determined to invade France likewise, he gave himself up to most austere penances, rigorous fasts, and long prayers, to obtain from God that his flock might not be attacked and dispersed by these wild wolves. To similar pious works he exhorted those in his charge, and he ordained certain days for penance and prayers to reconcile the offended majesty of God.

The prelates of the Church and the nobility of France had assembled and resolved to make a vow to the same effect, in honor of the holy Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, and to choose one of their number, who, in the name of all the others, should make a pilgrimage to the tombs of these chiefs of the Apostles. This determination was agreed to by all, and Servatius was elected to undertake the journey. The Saint did not demur, but set out at once, and after great troubles and dangers, he at length reached Rome. As soon as he had arrived, he repaired to the tombs of the holy Apostles, and there prayed with such intense fervor that during three days and nights he forgot to take any nourishment. Shedding many tears, he invoked the holy Apostles, as protectors of the true faith, most humbly requesting them to reconcile the offended God, and not to permit the enemy of the Catholic Faith to invade the territory of France and use the faith-

ful there as cruelly as he had done in other countries. Having prayed long, sleep overtook him, and he saw, in a vision before the altar, a magnificent throne, upon which Christ the Lord himself descended. A great number of angels surrounded the throne, and the two holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, were kneeling before it praying most fervently. After some time, however, Peter arose, and going towards Servatius, said: "Man of God; why dost thou not cease praying and weeping? Thou must know that God has resolved that France, as well as other countries of Europe, shall be devastated by the Huns on account of the sins of its inhabitants. The same will befall the City of Tongres on account of the vices of its people. To thee, however, God hath vouchsafed the grace not to be a witness to this calamity. Hasten home, therefore, take all thou needest for thy burial, and go to Maestricht, which the Almighty will keep free from the invader, that thou mayst be buried in peace." St. Servatius, although greatly dismayed at so unexpected a message, bowed to the divine will and returned to his See.

While on his journey to France, he was seized by the Huns and cast into a dark dungeon, but was again released on the following day, as the Almighty caused a heavenly light to surround the holy man, which, frightening the savages, induced them to give him his liberty. He foretold with weeping eyes, in France, but particularly in his own diocese, the impending punishment of heaven, and exhorted all to do penance, that the divine chastisement might benefit them, and that they might not fall a prey to eternal destruction. After this, he went to Maestricht and had his grave prepared; "for," said he, "I must soon die." All happened as he had predicted. He was seized by a slow fever, the end of which was death, but the precious death of a Saint. Holy as his life had been, so also was his end. All that St. Peter had told him in the vision took place. France and other countries were devastated by the Huns, but the City of Maestricht was spared on account of the Saint. The many miracles which were in the course of time wrought at his grave spread the fame of St. Servatius through the whole of Christendom.



To-day is also celebrated the festival of St. John, surnamed Silentiarius, or the Silent. He made himself renowned on account of the control he exercised over his tongue. He observed so strict a silence, that he remained during a long period without addressing any one by a single word, as he feared to commit sin by talking too much.

One day whilst he was in an hospital at Jerusalem begging God with many tears to reveal to him where unknown to the whole world, he might serve Him undisturbed, and best work out his own salvation, he perceived a splendid star in the form of a cross, and heard these words: "Follow this light." Immediately rising, he followed the star, which led him to the celebrated monastery of St. Sabas. There he remained until his happy death, without other occupation than the holiest and greatest of all works, namely, to serve God and to work out his salvation. The fact is truly remarkable, that as he said to some one in confidence, he did not remember to have spoken an idle word in sixteen years. As the words of St. James are incontestably true, that he who gives no scandal with his tongue is a perfect man, we may safely conclude from it how holy a man this servant of God must have been. At the time when St. Cyril began to write his life, St. John had already passed 47 years in a cell, and in constant silence. He attained to the age of 104 years, and persevered in his wonderful silence to the end.



We will add to the foregoing, a few words about St. Peter Regalati, who, renowned for his holiness and the miracles he wrought, was canonized in the year 1749. He was born in 1396, at Valladolid, in Spain, and was the son of rich and noble parents. He lost his father early. His mother, one of the most virtuous of women, inspired into him, from his tender years, such deep fear of offending God, and such horror of committing sin, that he punished himself most severely for the smallest venial sin of which he had inconsiderately been guilty. When only 10 years of age, he desired to be admitted into the Franciscan Order, but was not received until three years later. During his novitiate he already evinced a mature virtue, and endeavored to regulate his life strictly according to the rules of the Order. On perceiving that the monastery where he was, had considerably relaxed from the austerity of the first rules, and heard that in other monasteries there were strenuous efforts made by certain holy religious to reform abuses, he eagerly desired for the house in which he lived, a share in this blessing. But meanwhile, Peter Villacratius, a zealous priest of the same seraphic order, came to the monastery, with authority to revive and re-establish the first rigor of the rules of the order. Peter Regalati was the first who submitted joyfully to this reform, and who went with him into a newly founded and very poor cloister, not far from the village of Aquileria. Both endeavored to regulate their lives literally according to the first austere rules

of the Franciscans. Not long afterwards, others came to them desiring to join them. Their number increased so rapidly, that Villacretius entrusted to Peter the care of this house, and established another at Alroja, where he took upon himself the instruction of the novices. St. Peter was now placed above others, and endeavored to govern rather by example than by precept. His manner of life was very austere; he slept hardly three hours, lying either upon the bare floor or upon a bundle of straw. He scourged himself daily, and wore constantly either a chain or a girdle set with sharp points around his loins. His sustenance consisted mostly of bread, water, and some herbs; he very seldom partook of meat or wine. He divided the year, after his seraphic father's example, into nine fasts, which left but a few days of exemption. His love towards his neighbor, particularly the sick, was angelical. He several times took persons afflicted with leprosy, wounds, or ulcers, into the monastery, kissed and dressed their wounds and ulcers, and left no means untried to restore them to health. He evinced in all persecutions an undaunted courage, trust in God, and invincible patience. Not to speak of his other virtues, the remarkable fervor of his prayers has been greatly praised. He was often seen surrounded with beams of light and lifted high from the ground. But what is still more remarkable is the fact that at the time when the holy man said his prayers, particularly at night, so great a flame burst from his heart, that it not only filled the room but also penetrated the roof of the house. The inhabitants of Aquileria several times saw this flame, and supposing the building to be on fire, came running to extinguish it. After long searching they at length found that the fire was quite different from the natural fire, and that it emanated from the heart of this seraph burning with love of God. The bishop was one day a witness of it, and having investigated the matter most thoroughly, testified later to the truth of the report. God, who had kindled this fire of love in the heart of St. Peter, called His faithful servant to that abode where the elect are unceasingly occupied with praising and loving Him. He sent him, at the beginning of the forty days' fast, a severe dyspepsia, which the pious man bore out of love to God with unremitting patience. In Easter week he received once more the holy Sacraments, and soon after he joyfully gave his soul to God. His last prayer was the 30th Psalm, which begins: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped." His last words were: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." This happy death took place in the year 1456. Before and after it, God worked many miracles through the merits of His faithful servant. One day, as the holy man was praying with the other inmates of the monastery, a great

many swallows disturbed them by flying twittering around the convent. The Saint, rising from his knees, turned towards the birds, and commanded them to leave, and not to return, in order that his religious might not again be disturbed in their devotional exercises. The swallows immediately obeyed. They flew away; and to this hour none are seen on that place, although the neighborhood is full of them. Like the prophet Habakuk, he was more than once carried by an angel from one place to another: incontestible are the proofs of this in the process of his canonization. Many times he was seen walking over a river without wetting his feet. One day he spread his cloak on the river Rianza and upon it crossed over with his companions. Shortly before his death the bishop brought a youth to him who had been deformed from the day of his birth; and the Saint, in presence of the prelate, straightened his limbs by touching them. Whole books might be filled with the miracles that have been wrought by invoking the intercession of this Saint: the blind, the lame, the deaf, lepers, persons dangerously sick—many from the higher classes—have found health; nay, even several dead have been restored to life. Others have in a most wonderful manner, found help in their poverty and need at his grave.

We will relate, in few words, only one more event, as a proof of the miraculous power of this Saint. There was a poor old man to whom St. Peter, as long as he lived, gave his daily food. After the Saint's death the man was one day turned empty-handed from the convent door. The poor old man went to the grave of the Saint, and shedding bitter tears he said: "O compassionate father! if you were still alive, I should not be hungry and without help." Immediately the grave opened, the dead man stretched out his arm and gave the beggar a loaf of bread. This event was carefully investigated in 1630 and found correct.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. At the time when St. Servatius lived, God permitted many Catholic countries to be devastated by the Pagan Huns, by whom the inhabitants were either put to death or cruelly tortured. The same he allowed to take place at the time of the Arians and other heretics who followed them. And why? The holy Bishop Salvian writes that it was permitted in order to show the Catholics that their sins were much greater, much more odious in the sight of God, and therefore much more to be punished than the misdeeds of the heretics and heathens; that therefore they should guard themselves carefully from committing sin, and endeavor to live after the precepts of the true faith. The words of this holy Bishop are confirmed by other holy Fathers. The sins of the Catholics are in a measure greater, more displeasing, and

more punishable than the sins of the heretics and heathens. Why? Because the Catholics have more knowledge of God, and also more knowledge of the wickedness of sin and the punishment that follows it. God has given them more benefits than He gave the heretics, heathens, and infidels. God gives them in the true Church a greater number of graces and more efficacious means to avoid sin than he gives to others, not to mention the exhortations which He gives them partly by their own conscience, partly by priests, confessors and devout books. If a Catholic, notwithstanding these especial graces, still commits sin, his sin, on account of his ingratitude, is greater, more displeasing to God, and hence much more punishable, than the sin of a heretic, a heathen or an infidel. He has one day to give a much more severe account before the Judgment-seat of God, and may expect much greater punishment in the other world. "Wo to the faithful," writes St. Bonaventure, "who do not honor and serve God in accordance with their faith. They will be more rigorously punished than all the infidels." I say all this to you, my Catholic reader, that you, reflecting on it, may conceive a greater horror for sin, and by earnestly avoiding it, escape a severe reckoning.

II. St. John remained for a long space of time without addressing a word to any one, fearing to commit sin with his tongue. So much I cannot ask of you; but a care for your salvation imposes upon you the duty to refrain from too much and too idle talking, as it is certain that this gives the tongue occasion to offend God by many sins. According to the words of the Holy Ghost: "The tongue of the perverse shall perish" (Prov. x.). All idle words must one day be accounted for. St. John did not remember to have spo-

ken a single idle word during sixteen years, which, without doubt, must have been a great consolation to him. To you it will most assuredly not afford any consolation when you remember your many useless idle conversations. Again,—your solicitude for your salvation requires that you guard well your words, that you do not become addicted to those sins which are committed with the tongue; such as unchaste conversation, speaking derisively of religion, of the true Church, her commandments and ceremonies; lying, slandering, back-biting, cursing, swearing and quarrelling; by which vices innumerable persons have gone to eternal perdition. The Holy Ghost therefore admonishes you: "Melt down thy gold and silver, and make a balance for thy words and a just bridle for thy mouth: And take heed lest thou slip with thy tongue and fall in the sight of the enemies who lie in wait for thee, and thy fall be incurable unto death." (Eccl. xxviii.). By the former words, the Holy Ghost teaches you to be careful in your conversation, and to lay, so to speak, your words upon a scale before you allow them to pass your lips. By the latter words, he teaches you that you can make an incurable fall, that is, go to eternal perdition by the vices of the tongue. Hence, consider, and "take heed!"

III. St. Peter Regalati prayed with such intense fervor that the flames of divine love burning within him broke visibly out of his heart. How is it with your devotion? How much fervor do you manifest while at prayer? Ah! the coolness that one perceives in you while you are praying is no sign that your heart is burning with love of God. And why is it not thus burning? The principal reason is that when you, by means of prayer, converse with Him, you do not consider how great

and indescribably lovable God is. If you would more frequently think of this you would say your prayers with greater fervor and would be more benefited by them. "If you	desire that your prayers be powerful," says St. Peter Damian, "say them fervently. An indifferent prayer will not be accepted by the Most High."
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FOURTEENTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. BONIFACE, MARTYR.

At the beginning of the fourth century lived in Rome, a lady, young, beautiful, rich and of high rank. Her name was Aglae, and she was the daughter of Achatius, a Roman Senator. Although a Christian, she led an idle, frivolous, wanton, in one word, a very unchristian life. She had a steward, called Boniface, who was also a Christian in name, but who possessed no Christian virtues except compassion for the poor and hospitality to strangers. With this steward Aglae had for many years led a criminal life. At length, however, her eyes were opened and recognizing the terrible state of her soul, she began to fear divine punishment. She quitted her vices, and, weeping bitter tears on account of them, she confessed them with great compunction, and began a truly penitential life. She sold all her jewels and splendid clothes, and retiring from the pleasures of the world, she employed most of her time in prayers, fasting, and other works of penance. As she, however, had been the cause of Boniface's falling into such great crime, she was not satisfied with her own conversion, but prevailed upon him to follow her example. He did so, and thousands of times regretting his sins, he thanked God that he had not been taken away in the midst of them. No penance, in his eyes, was too great, and which he did not undergo with pleasure to punish his body, with which he had done so much evil. After some time, which both passed in penances, Aglae said to Boniface: "You know how deeply we both have offended God, and how we have forfeited all His grace. Hence it is necessary that we endeavor to obtain powerful intercessions. I have been told that when we honor the relics of the holy martyrs, we honor the martyrs themselves, and thus obtain their intercession with God, which must be very powerful. Let us then try to become possessed of some holy relic. I would build a church to the memory of the martyr, in order that, thus honored, he might pray for us to God and obtain the remission of our sins." Boniface was much pleased with this project, and

as he had heard that at Tarsus, in Cilicia, the Christians were cruelly martyred and their bodies sold, he determined to go thither on his sacred mission. Aglae provided him with sufficient money and gave him also several servants as companions. On taking leave of her, he said, jestingly: "You send me to bring you the relics of a holy martyr; what would you say, if God vouchsafed to me the grace to become a martyr: would you receive my body thus brought back to you?" Aglae answered: "This is no time for jesting. The crown of martyrdom is not destined for so great a sinner. Go and execute our intentions." Boniface set out on his journey, and during the same he prayed and fasted and most sincerely repented of his sins, wishing that he might give his life in expiation of them.

On his arrival at Tarsus, he left his servants at the inn, while he himself went into the street to find a Christian who might be able to give him the information he desired. Coming to the market-place, he saw that they were just torturing twenty Christians on account of their faith. He remained for some time looking at them immovably, when suddenly so intense a desire to suffer for the love of Christ filled his heart, that it was impossible for him to remain quiet. Pushing his way through the people into the circle, he embraced the still suffering martyrs, begging them with a loud voice to remain constant. "The fight, the labor," said he, "is short; the reward, the rest, eternal. Your martyrdom will soon be over, but the happiness that awaits you will never end. I pray you, servants of God," added he, "to be my intercessors with Christ, and to obtain for me, who am a great sinner, the grace to participate in your martyrdom and your victory." Simplician, the Governor, heard and saw Boniface, and having him brought before him, he asked him who he was, and how he dared act and speak as he had done. "I am a Christian," replied Boniface, "and rejoice that these Christians have the glory to die for Christ's sake. I wish that I may be equally fortunate." The Governor, enraged at these words, first ordered him to be torn most cruelly with hooks; then, that thorns should be driven between his finger-nails and the flesh, and after this, melted lead poured into his mouth. During this martyrdom the heroic confessor of Christ raised his eyes towards heaven and cried: "I give thanks to Thee, Jesus Christ, that Thou hast deigned to think me worthy to sacrifice my body and life for Thee. Aid Thy servant and strengthen him with Thy grace." Simplician, still more infuriated, had a large caldron filled with tar, and when it was boiling, ordered that the Saint should be cast into it. Boniface signed himself and the caldron with the holy cross, and instantly the vessel burst and the tar flowing about severely burned

many of those present. The Governor, now beside himself with rage, had nothing left but to condemn the invincible hero to be beheaded. Before Boniface received the death-stroke, he prayed to the Almighty upon his bended knees: "Lord, do not remember my misdeeds. I repent of them with my whole heart. Receive the sacrifice of my life, which Thou hast given me grace to make to Thee. Enlighten and convert all those who are present." Thus the undaunted Christian hero ended his life. Meanwhile, his servants not knowing where their master was, and why he remained so long absent, searched for him in different places, and describing his clothes, his height and figure, asked all they met if they had seen such a man. The following day they were told that a man of the description given had been beheaded because he would not abjure the Christian faith. The servants, startled, looked at each other and at length went to the place of execution, where the bodies of the holy martyrs were still lying, and where they found the body and the head of their master. They wept in mingled joy and sadness, and forthwith determined to buy no other body but that of the Saint, and to take it to Rome. The purchase was made for 500 pieces of gold, and after the sacred relics had been cleansed and embalmed, they brought them to Rome. Aglae, who had been informed, by a heavenly vision of all the events that had taken place, went to meet the servants, and reverentially receiving the treasure, she placed it in a precious tomb, and built a magnificent chapel over it. Aglae survived St. Boniface thirteen years, which she passed in continual penance, in a small dwelling erected near the chapel, and at last died peacefully.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Boniface and Aglae, two great sinners who had long lived a life of vice and shame, were thoroughly converted to God: both became Saints, and Boniface even a martyr. It is true that the conversion of a man who has long lived in sin, especially unchastity, is considered by the holy Fathers as a miracle which happens but seldom. Yet the All-merciful worked such a miracle on Boniface and Aglae, as He had done on some others, that no sinner should have cause to despair on account of his sins, though he may have committed them almost numberless times and have remained for years in them. "Sin," says St. Augustine "has limits both in number and time, but the mercy of God is immeasurable. Therefore, no sinner should despair, but, recognizing the mercy of God, do penance." "Are you wicked?" writes St. Chrysostom; "think of the sinners known as such." Are you unchaste? remember the unchaste woman in the Gospel. Are you a murderer? contemplate the thief who was crucified with Christ. Are you a great

sinner? think of St. Paul, at first a persecutor and afterwards an Apostle of Christ." I add, think of Boniface and Aglae. By this example shall the sinner, whom the Evil One tempts to despair on account of the enormity of his sin, be encouraged to trust in the mercy of the Almighty. He should be especially moved by the example of the thief on the cross, if he has remained long in sin, and in consequence is frightened by despairing thoughts. For as St. Jerome writes: "Conversion comes never too late. The thief went from the cross to Paradise." St. Augustine says: "God never despises true repentance. As long as we are in this life we can obtain forgiveness of our sins by repentance." Think of this truth in time, but misuse it not to your own destruction. Do not sin, or put off your penance because of the mercy of the Almighty, but repent of your past sins without delay; as it is unknown to you how long God will wait for your conversion. "God gave us the sure haven of repentance," says St. Augustine further, "that we may not despair on account of our sin. He has, however, also set a day for our death, which is unknown to us, lest by presumption, we increase our sins."

II. Boniface was, during the time of his sinful life, very kind towards the poor, which probably obtained

for him the grace of conversion. According to the words of the Archangel Raphael, "he finds mercy with God who gives alms" (Job. xii. 1). Taken in this sense, alms cover sin, as Holy Writ teaches; because God sometimes gives to a sinner the grace of conversion by reason of them, and thus forgives his sin. We should learn from this, that man, even during the time that he lives in great sin, ought not to neglect exercising himself in good works, especially in praying, fasting, and giving alms; as God, in reward of such deeds, has given to many the peculiar grace to repent and to work out their salvation. We must not, however, think that man by such good deeds, performed while in a state of mortal sin, can merit such grace, but that God is indescribably merciful, and in His infinite kindness bestows this grace upon him. Hence, a sinner must not think that on account of the good works performed while in a state of disgrace with God, he is sure not to go to eternal perdition, for God has nowhere promised heaven for such deeds. On the contrary, He has frequently and clearly manifested in His word that He will send to eternal damnation the sinner who does not repent. "Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish," says Christ our Lord (St. Luke xiii.).

FIFTEENTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. DYMENA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

"In Brabant, the memory of the holy virgin and martyr Dymena, the daughter of an Irish king, who was beheaded by order of her father for having confessed the Christian faith and preserving her

virginity." This notice is to-day in the Roman Martyrology. St. Dymrna was a royal princess, her father was a pagan, but her mother a Christian; she was baptized without the knowledge of the father as soon as she had become old enough to understand the truth of the Christian faith. From that hour she renounced all worldly pleasures, honors and riches, and aspired only after heavenly treasures. Soon after she also consecrated her virginity to God by vow in consideration of the priceless worth of virginal chastity. After her mother's death her father desired to marry again; as he, however, believed that there was not a more beautiful princess than Dymrna, he conceived the unheard-of thought of marrying his own daughter. Dymrna was horrified at such an incestuous demand, and reproving her father for his design, said that such godlessness had not been heard of since the world was created. Her father, however, persisted and pursued her with flatteries, caresses and promises and finally with menaces. Dymrna told him fearlessly that she was a Christian and had vowed to remain a virgin, but that even if this were not the case, she would die rather than consent to his desire. She pictured to him, with unanswerable eloquence, the terrible scandal he thought of giving to his subjects, the indescribable infamy of the vice, the presence of God, the account he had to render before the throne of the Almighty, the horror of dying in sin, and finally a whole eternity in the unending torments of hell. But the father, blinded by his passion and deaf to all her remonstrances, was not frightened, but said to her, full of rage: "You shall be obedient to my wishes. I demand it of you, and it shall be as I say." The chaste princess fearing that he might use violence, raised her eyes towards Heaven, and calling on the Almighty more with sighs and tears than words, she said to her father: "If I must obey you, grant me a delay of forty days." The wicked father was content, not imagining the intention of the chaste princess.

Dymrna immediately sought the advice of Geribert, a very pious priest, who had baptized her, and asked him what she should do in this terrible emergency. The priest said that the only means to save herself was by flight, and that he would safely conduct her to some other land. This answer quieted her. Providing herself with money, she changed her clothes, and leaving her father's palace, accompanied by the priest and a faithful servant, went on board a boat, and under the guidance of the Almighty, arrived happily at Antwerp. Thence she went to Gheel, a village not far off, where she had two huts built, one for herself, the other for the priest, and lived more an angelic than a human life.

The father, on being informed of his daughter's flight, stormed and raged like a maniac, and sent his servants to search everywhere for her. As, however, all their endeavors were fruitless, he went himself, with several servants, on board of a ship, and, directed by Providence, landed at Antwerp. He then again directed his servants to all the neighboring villages to inquire for his daughter. Two of them came to the inn from which Dympna sometimes procured her food. When they paid for their dinner which they had taken there, the inn-keeper, looking at the money they gave him, said: "I have often seen such money as this, but do not know its exact value." The servants, surprised at these words, asked of whom he had received it, and the inn-keeper revealed to them what he knew. Supposing that the stranger was she whom they were seeking, and having learned where she lived, they hastened to the king, and made him acquainted with what they had heard. The king, rejoicing at the news, went without delay to the indicated place, where he found his daughter. At first, Dympna became pale with fear when she saw her father, but raising her heart to God she was filled with heroic firmness. The king reproaching her with her flight, repeated his former wicked desire, commanding the priest Geribert to advise Dympna to consent. "What," exclaimed the pious priest; "you expect me to advise her to commit so horrible a crime! I had rather die a thousand deaths. I, however, advise, admonish, nay, command you, O King, in the name of the Most High, to abstain from your godless design, that you may not draw upon yourself the vengeance of heaven." The King, incensed beyond endurance at these words, dragged the priest out of the room, and had him cut to pieces. He then again pressed his daughter, not only with flatteries and caresses, but also with the most frightful threats, to assent to his wishes. As she, however, more heroically than ever resisted him, and with her eyes raised to heaven, repeated that she much preferred death to such a life, he became enraged to such a degree, that he commanded his servant to behead her, not only because she was a Christian, but also for not obeying her father. Others say, that the father himself murdered her, as his servants refused to commit the crime. Be this as it may, however, it is certain that she ended her life by the sword. The murderer, leaving the two bodies swimming in blood, departed; but the inhabitants of the neighboring villages respectfully buried them, and as God soon honored their graves with miracles, the clergy determined to exhume the holy remains. When they began to remove the earth they came to two coffins of white marble, which seemed not to be made by human but by angelic hands. In one reposed the

body of St. Geribert, which they brought first to the city of Xanthen, and later to Santbeck, in the Dutchy of Cleves. In the other were the remains of St. Dymrna and a purple precious stone, upon which the word Dymrna was written in distinct letters. Her body remained at Gheel until, after some years, the Bishop of Cambray again disinterred it, and placing the relics of the Saint in a casket wrought of gold and silver and ornamented with precious stones, deposited it in a church built to the memory of St. Dymrna. This holy virgin and martyr is represented as holding the Evil Spirit bound in chains, to show how great a power God gave her over evil spirits, as at her tomb many that were possessed were released.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The father of St. Dymrna endeavored to tempt his daughter to the most horrible crime, and became her murderer when she refused to consent. Thus far will an impure, uncontrolled passion bring any one. No crime is so detestable or dreadful that an immoral person may not fall into it. "If any one allows himself to be carried away by such a passion," says St. Chrysostom, "Satan will lead him into as many and as great vices as he pleases." The mind becomes blinded, the will hardened; and this in such a manner, that he neither listens to exhortations nor remonstrances, and defies even hell with all its torments. He refuses to do penance because he imagines that he cannot change his vicious conduct. "Lust has perverted thy heart," said Daniel (chap. xiii.), to one of the two wicked elders who would have induced the chaste Susanna to stain her pure life. A soft heart becomes deluded; stubborn, impenitent. And what will be its end? "Whoever indulges himself in impure love and remains long addicted to it," says St. Rupert, "continues to sin as long as he lives, because the impure fire never says: it is enough. Lust is a vice which is never satisfied," and as St. Peter

says, "a sin that ceaseth not" (II. Peter, chapter ii.). This is why men addicted to it are its slaves even in their old age, and cease not to sin until they cease to live. What else, however, can follow such an end except the beginning of endless torments? Hence, O Christian, let not unchaste love, so dangerous, so destructive, ever take possession of you, but if it has already carried you away, tear your heart forcibly away from it. As yet you are able to do it, if you earnestly desire. God will not withhold his aid, if you fervently pray to him.

II. St. Dymrna consented not to the horrible desire of her father: neither flattery, nor promises, nor menaces could change her, and she preferred rather to die than to offend the Almighty. Although God, for her own greater merit, as well as to make her an example to others, permitted her to be murdered, He on the other hand honors her chaste body with great miracles. The joys of which her soul now partakes in heaven, words cannot express, nor the mind comprehend.

It sometimes happens that a person is tempted to the vice of impurity by one to whom he owes

respect and obedience . whose favor and good-will is of importance to him, and who is able to injure him greatly if his wishes are not consented to. He is urged by flatteries, promises, and threats. How should he act ? He should follow the example of St. Dymrna. He must set aside all respect, and refuse obedience, as in such cases, no one is bound to obey. The favor of no one, whoever it may be, is of such consequence as the favor of the Almighty ; and He can punish much more severely when you offend Him, than the men of the whole world combined. God promises you a greater reward, if you are obedient to Him, than any man can give you if you consent to his wicked desires. The menaces of the Most High are much more to be feared than those of men. All that a man can threaten you with is temporal, and has regard to the body, but the menaces of God regard soul and body, and are eternal. Hence, God is to be loved, feared, and obeyed more than any man. " Let our only fear be, to fear anybody more than God," says St. Gregory Nazianzen. " I do not regard the menace of men," writes St. Augustine, " but rather turn my eyes upon Thy promises and menaces, O God ! than upon the promises and menaces of men."

SIXTEENTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. JOHN NEPOMUCEN.

St. John, whom, in our time, God has honored with many miracles, received his surname from Nepomuc, a small town two miles from Prague, where he was born. His parents were plain people and had lived many years without issue. After having made a vow, however, in honor of the blessed Virgin, whose miraculous picture is kept in a Cistercian convent not far from Nepomuc, St. John was born to them. At the time of his birth, several stars were seen which floated down from heaven and rested upon the house of his parents. This event was interpreted and admired as a prophecy of his future holiness. In his infancy, he fell dangerously sick, but recovered after his parents had consecrated him to God in the above-named place of pilgrimage. As he grew up, his greatest delight was to assist the priests at Mass, and he passed the whole forenoon in that sacred occupation in the Cistercian Church. In his studies he made such rapid progress that he became Doctor of Divinity and Canon Law. After being ordained priest, he retired one month from all intercourse with men, and prepared himself, by prayers, penances and purifying his soul, for the first holy Mass. Soon after, he was commissioned to preach at Prague in the Church of our Lady, in the suburb ; and he did this with such eminent success, that the

Archbishop raised him to the dignity of Canon and preacher of the Cathedral, which functions he discharged until his death. Wencelaus, at that period king of Bohemia, attended his sermons frequently, with his whole court, and esteemed the Saint highly. He offered him the See of Leimeritz, and afterwards the rich provostship of Wissherad, but John refused both, hoping to do more good by preaching. Queen Jane, the wife of Wencelaus chose him for her confessor and almoner. In these offices he evinced great wisdom and ability, and the former of them became the means of his obtaining the glorious crown of martyrdom. The king, neglecting the affairs of the land, became, meanwhile, more and more a slave to debauchery and drunkenness, and added to the scandal which this gave to his people, by acts of the most unheard-of cruelty. Not able to alter his conduct either by exhortations or entreaties, the pious queen at last became silent, and endeavored by prayer and other virtuous exercises, to inspire her husband with better thoughts and the fear of God. She frequently received the holy Sacraments in order to give more power to her prayers, and to be strengthened in patience. The wicked king regarded her frequent confessions with mistrusting eyes, even suspecting that the queen might have been as faithless to him as he had been to her. Hence the desire to know what the queen confessed was awakened in him, and calling St. John into his presence, he, after long circumlocution, and giving some feigned reasons, informed him of his wish, promising him all possible favors and honors in case he satisfied his curiosity. The Saint was at first stunned at so sacrilegious a demand, and then explained to the king the greatness of the crime which a priest would commit if he revealed the least thing which had been told him under the seal of confession, adding that he would much rather die than become guilty of so terrible a crime. The king dissimulated his anger at this reply, resolving to wait for another opportunity. He had not to wait long; for when, with unprecedented cruelty he had commanded that a cook, who had sent to the royal table a capon badly roasted, should be himself roasted alive on a spit, and no one dared to disobey the tyrant, St. John went to him and endeavored to dissuade him from such barbarity. But instead of listening to the Saint, he gave orders to cast him into a dark, horrible dungeon, and left him there a day without any food. After this, he sent the jailer to him with a message that he could save his life only by fulfilling the king's desire. The Saint well understood the message, and replied that he remained firm in what he had already said to the king. In consideration of this constancy Wencelaus determined to have recourse to kindness. He had the Saint liberated, and informed that he repented of his

harshness, and begged his pardon, at the same time requesting him to appear the following day at the royal table as a token of complete reconciliation. The Saint complied with the behest and appeared, but no sooner had the king arisen from the table, than he repeated his godless desire, pressing the holy man at first with great promises and afterwards with cruel menaces. Seeing that neither the one nor the other were respected by St. John, he commanded that he should be again dragged to the dungeon and stretched upon the rack. To add to his suffering, he was at the same time burned with torches. The brave martyr raised his eyes to heaven and only repeated frequently the sacred names of Jesus and Mary. When he had been long tortured, the king, who was present, left, and St. John was once more set at liberty.

He informed nobody of what had happened to him, but as soon as his wounds were healed, he discharged his functions as he had hitherto done. As it was, however, revealed to him in a vision that his silence would cost him his life, he bade farewell to his hearers on the Sunday before Ascension. His text was, "A little while and you shall not see me." In this sermon he predicted the evils which would soon fall upon Bohemia in consequence of new heresies, and exhorted all to repentance and to constancy in the Catholic faith. On the day before the festival of the Ascension, he made a pilgrimage to Bunzel where a miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin was honored. Arriving there he fervently recommended his approaching death-agony to the divine mother. At evening he returned to Prague. The king, leaning out of the window of his palace, saw him. Having given orders to bring the Saint before him, he addressed him with these shameless words: "Listen, parson! Thou wilt have to die, if thou dost not immediately tell me what the queen confessed to thee. I vow to God that thou shalt drink water!" The Saint repeated fearlessly his former words: "I will rather die a thousand times." Hardly had this passed his lips, when the king commanded the holy man to be dragged into the adjoining apartment and kept there. As soon as night had come he was led to the bridge that unites the old and new portions of Prague, and from thence cast into the Moldaw, in the year 1383.

Heaven did not allow this crime to be concealed for one single hour. An uncommonly bright light in the form of many stars was seen, which seemed to float upon the water and accompanying the holy body, remained with it. All the people came running towards the river, but could not explain the prodigy. The king himself was called by the queen to witness the scene, and looked at it in fear and trembling. When the next day dawned, the waters of the river were divided into two parts and

in the midst was seen, lying on the sand with a sweet smile upon his face, the body of the Saint. The Canons brought it at first into the nearest Church, but soon after transferred it with imposing solemnities to the Cathedral. From that day date the honors which were paid to the Saint, and which God approved by numberless miracles which were wrought at his tomb. After the expiration of more than 300 years, the holy body was exhumed, and the tongue of the Saint was found fresh without a sign of corruption. When, six years later, this tongue was shown to a deputation, sent by the Pope to verify the report, it suddenly swelled up before the eyes of all present and changed from dark red to purple, as though it were still imbued with life. Remarkable is the fact that every one who approached the tomb of the Saint, irreverently was sure to be punished with some public derision. Many examples of recent date have verified this. In conclusion, it is to be remarked that the intercession of Saint John Nepomucen may be requested with great benefit by those whose good name has been tarnished or who are in danger of a public disgrace as also by those who feel difficulties in confessing their sins. In our times this glorious Saint has become particularly renowned, not only on account of the incorruption of his tongue and the many miracles which have taken place at his shrine, but also on account of the many graces and benefits which the Almighty has bestowed upon those throughout the whole Christian world, who with confidence ask his intercession. Many books are filled with the relation of these facts.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. John spoke fearlessly when to speak was a duty, as when he endeavored to dissuade the king from his cruelty. But he also knew when to be silent, when silence was a duty, as when he would reveal nothing of what the queen had confessed, although the king was determined to know it and tried to force him with terrible tortures and even menaced him with death. To speak and to remain silent at the proper time and place is a great art, which we must acquire if we would attain heaven. Numberless sins are committed by speaking where we ought to keep silence, or by being silent when we ought to speak. Let your own conduct on this point be an example to you. You slander your neighbor and reveal his secret faults to those who need not know them. You lie, curse, dishonor the holy Sacraments, murmur against God and man, seek to revenge yourself on your enemies, hold unchaste conversations, speak insultingly of holy religion, the true Church, and its ministers. These are all sins which you commit by speaking what you ought not to speak. You are, however, silent when others converse in a godless, impure manner, when the honor of a neighbor is traduced, and when holy religion and the Church are outrageously

spoken of. You are silent to the faults of those under you. You are silent in holy confession, and do not reveal all you ought. You are like a dumb brute when you ought to defend the honor of God and protect your neighbor. These are all sins which you commit, because you are silent when you ought to speak. Ah ! open your eyes and recognize the necessity of following the example of St. John, not to speak when and where you ought to be silent, and to remain silent only at the right time. "There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak," says the Holy Ghost (Eccl. iii.). "We must, however, take heed," says St. Gregory, "to distinguish well the time, and therefore bridle our tongue when it is time to be silent ; but when it is time to speak, not restrain it, as otherwise we shall sigh one day, as he did, who said : "woe is me, because I have held my peace" (Isai. vi.). Hence, David requested of God to put a guard to his mouth and a door before his lips. The guard allows not everybody to leave the house or fortress, neither does he allow any one to leave at all hours. The door does not remain always closed. One opens and shuts it. Hence, David asked God for the grace to speak at the right time and place, and also to keep silence when and where it was necessary. "Set a watch, O, Lord," said he, "before my mouth : and a door round about my lips" (Psalm cxl.). In reference to these words St. Chrysostom writes : "Let us constantly guard our mouth. Let us use reason as a key, not to keep it always locked, but to open it at the proper time. For sometimes, keeping silence is better than speaking, just as at other times speaking is more needful than silence. Therefore, the Holy Ghost says, through the lips of the wise man : "There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak." If it

were intended that the mouth should always be open, the Creator would not have provided it with a door. If it should always be locked we needed no guard. There ought to be a proper time for every thing." Thus teaches St. Chrysostom in reference to this point. Pray to God that he may give you grace to live in accordance with such important teachings.

II. St. John revealed nothing of what he had heard in holy confession, although he drew upon himself the disfavor of the king and even death. What this Saint did is the duty of every priest. He is not allowed to reveal the least word of what is told him under the seal of confession, should it even cost him his life. There is no authentic example that a priest has ever departed from his duty on this point. God has taken care to keep the seal of confession intact. He himself has ordered that it should be so, that no penitent should have reason to feel ashamed in the confessional, and hence conceal some sin. Those that are not Catholics and are requested by their ministers—as is often done in some places—to practice oral confessions, are to be excused if they conceal their greatest sins, partly, because it is of no advantage to them to confess to their minister, partly, because they have to fear that their sins are not kept secret, but will be revealed to others. What, however, can you, Catholic Christian, say in your excuse, if you voluntarily conceal something in the confessional, as you know that your confessors never dare reveal what you have told. Never let shame prevail on you to conceal, voluntarily, a mortal sin. If it is a hard task to confess your faults openly and truthfully, say to yourself : "It is for the welfare of my soul ; I myself will be benefited by it." "For thy soul, be not ashamed to say the

truth," says the wise man. "For there is a shame which bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace." The former of these is when we conceal a sin out of shame ; the latter when, conquering this weakness, we confess truthfully and thus make ourselves ashamed by our self-accusations before a priest.

SEVENTEENTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. PASCHAL BAYLON, CONFESSOR.

St. Paschal Baylon, a lay-brother of the celebrated Franciscan Order, was born in Spain, in the kingdom of Valencia, on Pentecost Sunday, 1340. He had hardly reached boyhood, when he was already employed in watching the herd, as his parents were too poor to allow him to learn a trade. In this occupation, so looked down upon by the world, Paschal remained until he took the habit, but so innocent and pious was his life, that he never stained his soul with a mortal sin. He was such an enemy to cursing, lying, unchaste conversation, and licentious songs, that he would not endure these sins in others, but most earnestly endeavored to reform those addicted to them. He took the utmost care that the cattle entrusted to him should not damage the fields and meadows of others, and when he perceived that, without his fault, such had been the case, he made good the damage out of his own wages, or by his labor. He never took the least thing out of the gardens or vineyards, as was so frequently done by others of his station. One day the chief herdsman requested Paschal to bring him some grapes from a neighboring garden that he might appease his thirst. The pious youth refused to do so on account of its being a sin, an offence done to God. When the chief herdsman pressed him with threats, he said fearlessly: "The grapes do not belong to us, and I will sooner let myself be torn to pieces than take the least of what belongs to another, as it is a sin," so great was the Saint's horror of sin. Not less was his desire to do good, and he loved prayer much more than all the pleasures of youth. He went frequently to a chapel which stood in the field, or to some church, to worship there the most holy Sacrament, and to honor the Blessed Virgin. As he had, however, not many opportunities for this, he cut an image of the Divine Mother on the top of his shepherd's staff with a cross above it. This staff he placed in the ground, knelt before it and said his prayers with great devotion. How agreeable this must have been in the sight of the Most High,

became manifest from the fact that he wrought miracles with this staff; for as often as Paschal desired to refresh his thirsty companions, the other shepherds, he struck his staff into the earth and immediately there flowed a spring of the clearest water. In the twentieth year of his age, God called him by a visible apparition of St. Francis and St. Clare to enter into religion. The gentleman, however, of whose herd he took care, had so much affection and esteem for him, that he determined to adopt him as his son and make him heir of his large fortune. He disclosed this determination to him, but Paschal allowed nothing to prevent him from fulfilling his vocation, and rejected all earthly goods from a desire to gain so much more surely the treasures of heaven. On Candlemas-day he took the habit, and was so assiduous in the discharge of his new duties, that in a short time, from a holy herdsman, he became a holy religious. He exercised himself most zealously in all virtues, especially in fervent devotion towards God and the Blessed Virgin, in deep humility, abject poverty, continual self-immolation, and obedience in all things. His sustenance was generally only water and bread. Except mornings and evenings he partook of nothing, not even in the greatest heat. His bed was the bare floor, and his pillow a stone or a piece of wood. He constantly wore a hair-shirt and daily scourged himself most severely. The greater part of the night he devoted to prayer, which he frequently performed with such devotion, that he remained whole hours upon his knees immovable, or was found in divine ecstasies. During the day, when at work, he raised his heart continually to heaven by pious ejaculations, and never began the labors of the day without first imploring the divine assistance with at least a short prayer. But devoutly and attentively as he said his prayers, he was far from repeating them with scrupulous fear when his mind had been distracted. He used to say that the Almighty was displeased with such repetitions, and that they gave Satan an opportunity to disquiet and trouble the soul. He walked continually before the eyes of the Almighty, always remembering His presence; hence he was never seen sad or vexed, but always bright and cheerful. He would not listen to any praises, but blushed and immediately left if anything was said in his commendation. On the contrary, he showed great pleasure if others derided him or mocked him. His utmost care was to keep his conscience clear from all stains. He avoided the least wrong as scrupulously as others did great vices, especially anything against chastity. Before he was admitted into the Order he blushed with shame when one day a shepherd coming to him made an unchaste jest; but afterwards, indignant at his

licentious speech, he assured him that if any one approached him with a wicked intention, he would give the wanton such a reception as would soon extinguish the flames of evil desire. When, having received the habit, he was door-keeper, an impudent woman dared to kiss him when he opened the door for her. He, however, filled with holy anger, pushed her away, and shut the door in her face. On other occasions where he perceived the least danger of falling into sin, he manifested the same prudence.

Anxious as Paschal was, however, to avoid all sin and to practice good works himself, he was also equally zealous to promote the practice of all virtues in others. Although he was not a priest, he labored without intermission for the spiritual welfare of his neighbor. Those whom he could influence he admonished with kind words to keep the commandments of God and the church, to receive frequently the holy Sacraments, to abstain from vices to which they were addicted, to love their neighbors, to be patient, and to exercise other Christian virtues. By such admonitions he deterred many from sin, and led them to penance and to a Christian life, as his words possessed a wonderful power to obtain that which he desired. A priest one day spoke long and most emphatically to a man who had suffered great wrong, urging him to forgive his offender. The angry man, however, not only refused to listen, but drove the priest away with the threat that if he did not leave, he would lay hands on him. Paschal, who had accompanied the priest, when the latter went away, turned to the man and said: "Well, my brother, forgive out of love to God the offence done to you." By these few words the Saint immediately obtained what the priest had not effected with his long exhortations. The injured man answered unhesitatingly "Yes! out of love to God I will forgive." In like manner he persuaded a hardened sinner to do penance, and strengthened a woman, who looked with undue fear upon her approaching death, to bear patiently the will of the Almighty. He prayed with particular zeal for all those who preached; that God would give their words power to convince and to convert their hearers. Experience showed that his prayer was graciously accepted by the Almighty.

What we have related above placed the holy man very high in the esteem not only of the brethren of his Order, but also in that of all others. He became still more celebrated by those extraordinary graces and gifts that were graciously conferred on him by our Lord. These were, first, a wonderful comprehension of the most profound mysteries of faith, which he was able to explain so clearly that even learned men were astonished, as it

was well known that Paschal had never studied. Secondly: an unusual knowledge of the hearts of those with whom he came in contact: he was therefore often successful when he admonished others to confess secret sins, and to reform their conduct. Thirdly: the gift of prophecy; hence he foretold to several sick persons that their health would soon be restored, while to others he revealed that the hour of their death was near at hand. Besides this, God worked many miracles through him, especially to the comfort of the poor, whom he always endeavored to aid as much as he could. This faithful servant of the Almighty used to say: "Man ought to have towards God the heart of an obedient child; towards his neighbor the feelings of a tender mother; but towards himself he ought to act as an inflexible judge." As he constantly observed the second point in regard to the poor, so also he kept the first and third towards God and himself. At all times he endeavored to obey God in everything and to be austere towards himself.

When, in the 52d year of his age, Paschal became sick, he immediately prepared himself for his end, as the hour of his death had been told him by divine revelation. When his physician announced to him that his death was near, he gave him thanks for so joyous a message, adding that he could not have brought him more welcome tidings. On Ascension-day he asked several times if the High Mass had already commenced, and when they answered, "Yes!" he took the crucifix and rosary and pressing them to his heart, his soul went to heaven at the precise moment when the priest, after the consecration, raised the Host. At the same hour some pious persons who lived far off saw the Saint like a second Eliás, carried in a chariot of fire towards heaven.

For three days the holy remains were laid out in the church, in order to give the masses of people, who desired to see them and pay them due honors, an opportunity to do so. On the second day it was observed that the body thus exposed, opened its eyes and kept them fixed on the sacred Host during the elevation. The same happened when the chalice was raised. Those who had known the Saint in his life-time believed that God had wrought this miracle to manifest how pleasing had been to Him the devotion that St. Paschal had always shown towards the most blessed sacrament. When, eight months after his death, the body of the Saint was exhumed, it was found in a perfect state of preservation, although it had been covered over with unslaked lime. In the same condition it was found many years later. His tomb became celebrated on account of the many miracles which were wrought there.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Towards God, we ought to have the heart of an obedient child ; towards our neighbor the feelings of a tender mother, towards ourselves we ought to act like a severe judge. This was the doctrine of St. Paschal, by which he regulated his life and attained to great holiness. Do you also regulate your life by it ? Ah ! only too many show in their deeds that they follow quite different rules. They are disobedient to God ; transgress his laws without fear and almost numberless times. They respect neither his admonitions nor his menaces. Towards their neighbor they are hard and pitiless, and even if able to help him, they refrain from doing so, but on the contrary often oppress and persecute him. Towards themselves, however, they are very lenient, explain every thing to their own advantage, and seek to gratify their love of ease and comfort in all things. They neither restrain themselves nor punish themselves for misdeeds by penance. They seek only after what the flesh and sensuality desire, and detest every thing that has a shadow of self-denial. But who of all such people will ever attain virtue ? Who will arrive at holiness ? Who will enter heaven ? Read the history of all the Saints ; you will not find one of this description among them. On the contrary, you will find that all the Saints, as soon as they began to serve God, and occupy themselves seriously with their salvation, regulated their lives after the same doctrine that St. Paschal followed. What are you determined to do henceforth ?

II. St. Paschal would not bring any grapes out of a strange garden to his master, because he thought it

a sin, although his master had commanded him to do it. In this the Saint acted rightly, for if any man commands something which is against God or is a sin, we must obey God rather than man, whoever he may be, as the Almighty is an inexpressibly greater Lord than any man, were he even master of the whole world, as I have already said somewhere else. To take a few grapes would only have been a venial sin, but the Saint would rather have been torn in pieces than commit even a venial sin, as he knew that it would offend the Most High. He knew, also, that we begin with small sins, and from these gradually fall into greater ones. The greatest thieves begin by taking trifles, and thus step by step, go on the road that leads them to their ruin. Judas, the traitor, who by unjust ways wished to amass money, did not commence by betraying and selling Christ, but by small thefts. But his avarice gradually led him so far, that, to increase his money, he did not scruple to betray the Saviour. In the same manner all other vices begin. Hence, Satan, when he desires the ruin of a pious man, does not plunge him at once into vice, but tempts him first to small venial sins. If once he brings him so far that he no longer shrinks from venial sin, his falling into mortal sin will not be far distant. Every one should beware of this deceit of Satan, and follow the admonition of St. Ephrem, who says : " I exhort and entreat you, my brethren, that you not only avoid great sin and vices, but also those which seem small, and are generally not much dreaded until the day comes when we have to give an account of them. The

Evil One endeavours to ruin us | you may one day partake, with
 through them. Shun carefully the | Christ, of the eternal glories of
 nets and temptations of Satan, that | heaven."

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. FELIX OF CANTALICIO, CONFESSOR.

It would be a difficult task to find, from the commencement of the Christian era to the time in which we actually live, a century in which the Catholic Church was more assailed by heresy than that in which St. Paschal Baylon, of whom we spoke yesterday, and St. Felix lived: both enjoying great fame on account of their virtues as well as of the miracles they wrought. The Almighty manifests through these, as well to the heretics as to the faithful, that the Catholic Church, which was accused of manifold errors, was still the same true holy Church in which alone salvation is found, that she had been from the first centuries.

St. Felix was born of poor but pious parents, in the year 1515, at Cantalicio, a village in Italy. When a boy, he had to tend the flock like St. Paschal, and like him improved the opportunity; for, when others of his own station idled away their time, he went into a wood near by, where he had cut a cross in an oak, and there spent many hours in praying and weeping. At twelve years of age he hired himself to a nobleman, by whom he was at first charged with the care of the cattle, and afterwards with that of tilling the ground. He never commenced his labors, however early in the morning, before saying his prayers, and ended his day's work in the same manner. During his work he delighted himself with pious ejaculations and sacred songs. One day having listened to the life of the holy hermits, he was filled with the desire to follow their example. In the course of time, however, he changed this idea and went to Citta Ducale, desirous of entering the cloister of the Capuchins at that place. When he petitioned to be admitted among them, the superior represented to him the austerity of the Order, and pointing to a crucifix which was covered with blood, he said, that was the example which a brother of the Order had to imitate. Felix, sinking at the feet of the superior, said with streaming eyes: "I take God to witness that I seek nothing but to lead a life of mortification." The superior, in consideration of such a fervent desire to live a religious life, received him among the novices, and Felix proved

by deeds the truth of his words. When he had been four years in the Order, he was sent to Rome, and was charged with the duty of collecting alms for his brethren, which functions he discharged for forty years with so much edification, that he gained the appellation of Saint, and was greatly honored by all classes of people as well as by the Pope and other high dignitaries of the church. He walked daily, in all weathers, barefooted through the city to ask alms. On leaving the cloister he said to his companion: "Dear brother, the rosary in hand, the eyes cast down, the soul raised to heaven!" In this manner he pursued his way in profound recollection and in constant communion with God. Many hundred times he repeated: "Thanks be to God!" He said this, not only when he received alms, but also in suffering, persecution, and other misfortunes, as he was accustomed to praise and give thanks to God on all occasions. He also admonished the children in the street, frequently to repeat these words. His own share of the alms he received was the least of all, as he observed an almost continual fast. The ordinary fasts of the Order he kept on bread and water. His bed was a rush-mat laid upon the floor, and for a pillow he used a bundle of vine-branches. He never slept longer than two hours, scourged himself every night three times, and wore hair-cloth almost always. One day he was asked by a Cardinal, if, as he was now an old man, he did not desire to lay down his troublesome office. Felix answered: "A soldier must die with his sword in his hand, and a beast of burden under his load. May God prevent me from allowing any rest to my body, which is good for nothing but to work and to suffer."

Austere as this servant of God was towards himself, he was kind and tender to others, especially to the poor, whom it was his pleasure to nurse at night, although he had spent the day in the wearisome occupation of collecting alms. He kept many from sin by his kind admonitions, and exhorted those who had done wrong to repentance. He represented to the latter the danger in which they stood of sinning again and consequently of dying in the displeasure of God. One day, hearing that some young men were going to their sinful amusements, he went to them and throwing himself upon his knees before them, while his eyes overflowed with tears, said: "My brothers! have pity on your souls!" By this, he not only kept them from sin, but changed them into quite different beings. A calf was one day presented to a judge at whose house the Saint happened to be. As the animal began to low, Felix said smilingly to the judge: "Listen, Sir, how this animal begs a favorable sentence for him who has sent it to you!" These words caused the judge to acknowledge his wrong and to

reform. A lawyer, showing him his large library, asked what he thought of it. Felix, pointing to a picture of our crucified Saviour, said: "If you omit to study diligently in that great book of learning, your other books will teach you more wrong than right," so well did the Saint know how on all occasions to give valuable instruction. Not less watchful was the Saint over himself, and it is well known that amidst all the dangers to which he was daily exposed, he kept his purity unspotted. To this end he kept his senses under his control by strict retirement into himself, by constant mortification, by frequent prayer, and by great devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

Once, praying as was his custom, during the night in the church, he felt in his heart so burning a love towards our Lord, that, as if transported out of himself, he hastened to the altar where the image of the holy Mother with the divine Child was standing, begging to let her Son come to him only for one moment. The Blessed Virgin deigned to appear to him and laid the Child in his arms. Who can describe the intense love that filled his heart, how many tears he shed, and with what tender devotion he embraced the Divine Child! This grace, however, was not the only one which was bestowed upon him. God gave him power to prophesy and to restore the sick to health by a short prayer. But he was nevertheless most humble, spoke only in the most abject terms of himself, and would not allow any one to praise or honor him. He exercised himself with true heroism in patience, not only when he suffered ignominies, but also when God tried him with severe sickness. A physician once asked him during his suffering why he did not pray to God to soothe, or entirely relieve him of his pains. He replied: "Should I ask my Lord to soothe my pains and restore my health? I can assure you that if I were convinced that in this manner my health would be immediately restored, yet I would not do it. Ought I not joyfully to bear, out of love to the Almighty, any suffering by which He may prove me?" He desired nothing of men for the mitigation of his pains. The most severe bodily agony he esteemed a precious gift of God, and afflictions he called well-merited punishment: this strengthened his patience. In obedience and all other virtues he served as a most perfect model to all his brethren.

After having thus led an exemplary life until he had reached the age of 72 years, God took this faithful servant to the abode of the blessed, after a sickness of 18 days. Having received the holy sacrament, it was observed that he kept his eyes fixed on one place, where no one but himself saw anything. The ejaculations that he made from time to time intimated that he saw

something unusual. A priest asked him what he saw. The Saint replied: "Do you not then see my dear mother, the blessed Virgin surrounded by a choir of Angels?" And soon after he expired with a smile upon his face, in the year of 1587. Many miracles which shortly after his death were wrought on possessed, blind, lame, and those afflicted in other ways have made the Saint gloriously known through the whole of Christendom.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Have you read what St. Felix represented to those who had committed sin, in order that they should do penance without delay? A double danger; first, the danger of falling into still greater sin; secondly, to die in sin and thus go to eternal destruction. In both he was right. A person who having committed great sin, defers to confess it, falls easily into deeper sin and makes his conversion much more difficult. St. Gregory teaches this in the following words: "Sin, which is not immediately cancelled by penance, draws man by its weight into still deeper sin; hence it is so difficult for him to rise." Further, man is not for one moment sure of his life. There is no hour, in which he may not die. If he dies in mortal sin, he is lost for all eternity. So long, therefore, as he remains in mortal sin, is he at every moment in danger of going to destruction. Consider both points well, O Christian; and if you have sinned out of weakness or wickedness, hesitate not, but hasten to confess; otherwise you make conversion much more difficult for yourself, and are in continual danger of losing your soul. If you believe that there is a hell, and if you think of what you have heard of hell, tear yourself from the danger of being precipitated into it for all eternity.

II. St. Felix frequently repeated the words: "Thanks be to God." He also advised others to do the

same. Nothing is more just than to give frequent thanks to God for all the benefits we receive from Him, the number and greatness of which is only known to Himself. God has created you to a high end. God has ransomed you at a great price. God has in Holy Baptism made you holy in preference to thousands of others. God has called you, without any merit of your own, to the true Church, out of which there is no salvation. God has forgiven your sins as often as you have repented and confessed them. God did not take you away in your sins, as He has taken many thousands. God has not condemned you to eternal destruction, as He did with thousands of others, who perhaps had committed fewer and less grievous sins than yours. God has given you time, in preference to thousands of others, until the present hour, to do penance and to work out your salvation. Besides these priceless gifts, He has bestowed many others on your soul and body, in many different ways, and at many different times. You may just as well try to number the stars in the firmament as count God's graces. Since you were born, not a day, a night, nay, not even an hour has passed in which you have not received some benefit from the Almighty, or have not been shielded by His mighty arm from some evil which menaced your soul or your body. What then is more proper than that you should offer Him daily

the most humble thanks, and that you should serve him most fervently? "For," says St. Bernard, "what heart, were it even made of stone, would not become softened by so many and so great benefits, which so merciful a Lord has bestowed upon us!" "In all things give thanks," says St. Paul; "for this is the will of Christ" (Thess. v.).

NINETEENTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. PETER CELESTINE, POPE AND FOUNDER OF A RELIGIOUS ORDER:
AND ST. IVO, CONFESSOR.

Peter Celestine, a holy hermit, founder of the order of Celestine monks, was born in Isernia, in the county of Abruzzo. In early youth he gave clear indications of the virtues and holiness for which he afterwards became renowned. When scarcely six years old he one day said to his mother: "Mother I will some day become a true servant of the Almighty." His future life made these words true. Having been sufficiently instructed in the sciences, he retired for two years into a dark forest, led by the desire to serve God. At first he shared the dwelling of another virtuous hermit, but afterwards he lived alone in a hut. Persuaded by one of his friends, he went to Rome, was ordained priest and entered the Order of St. Benedict. With the permission of the Abbot, however, he left the monastery, and resumed his solitary life on Mount Morrone; hence he is sometimes called Peter of Morrone. From thence he went with two companions to Mount Magella, not far from the city of Sulmona. His reason for these changes was the desire to live quietly and hidden from the eyes of men. The austerity of the life he led almost surpassed that of the ancient hermits of Egypt and other lands. Not less admirable was his profound humility. Although, as already related, he had been ordained priest, he dared not go to the altar to offer the divine sacrifice, in consideration of the infinite majesty of God and his own nothingness. At length, admonished by his confessor, he overcame his too great fear, and offered, with great comfort of heart, the holy sacrifice, and deeply regretted at the same time, that he had so long deprived himself of the great consolation it brought to him. The exemplary life this holy hermit led was soon known in all the surrounding country, and inspired many, some even of high rank, with the desire of living under his direction. Admonished by divine revelation, he built a small Church in honor of the Holy Ghost, and near it erected a monas-

tery. This was the beginning of the celebrated Celestine Order, which, approved by Gregory X., grew even while its founder was yet alive, into such importance, that Celestine alone built 36 monasteries and filled them with fervent servants of God. He visited all of these as often as possible, and having encouraged the inmates to continual zeal in the service of the Most High, he retired to his cell and led a life more angelical than human.

The Almighty, who humbles the proud but raises the humble, was pleased to exalt this His faithful and lowly servant before the whole world in a most unprecedented manner. He inspired the Cardinals, who, after the death of Nicholas IV., disagreed in the choice of a new head of the Church, to choose unanimously this holy hermit as successor to the Papal chair. When, however, the envoys came to inform him of it, the holy man was frightened, and left nothing untried to decline so high a dignity. He endeavored to fly, but all was useless, he was obliged to obey the envoys, or rather, to obey God, and received the Papal crown at Aquila, in 1294. After the coronation he wished to continue his former life of austerity and solitude. But as the many and important functions of his high station rendered this impossible, he was soon weary of his dignity and office, and resigned them voluntarily after the expiration of a few months, with the intention of returning to his solitude. He had already left the city, when his successor, Boniface VII., sent after him, and had him confined in a castle, fearing that a division of the Church might arise. He remained thus in custody almost ten months, always content and never complaining; nay, sometimes he even said jestingly to himself: "Peter! you have so long wished for a quiet cell; behold, you now possess it!"

God revealed to him his end and his approaching eternal happiness. When he had received the holy sacraments with the greatest devotion, he lay down upon the floor, began cheerfully to sing, and expired uttering the words: "Let every spirit praise the Lord!" Before, as well as after his death, he was honored by God with many miracles.



By the side of this holy Pope, we will place a holy priest called Ivo. He was born at St. Martin, a small village in Brittany. Soon after his birth, his pious mother, Azona, had a revelation from God that this child would become a faithful servant of the Lord, which inspired her to attend to his education with the greatest care. God ordained that several kind persons, seeing his eagerness to study, gave him the means to fulfil his desire. In Brittany and

afterwards in other parts of France, he finished his studies with such proficiency, particularly in Canon law, that neither in Paris nor at Orleans, where he went to school, could any one be found who was equal to him. During the years of his studies, he avoided the companionship of heedless youths, fearing not only that he might be distracted in his labors, but also enticed into wickedness. To preserve himself pure, he used the means which had so effectually served so many Saints: namely, fervent prayers, frequently receiving the holy sacraments, carefully guarding his senses, continual bodily mortification, and avoiding all unnecessary intercourse with the other sex.

After having finished his studies, he was chosen, not less on account of his pious conduct than for his great learning, first, Archdeacon and afterwards Vicar of the Bishop of Treguier. These onerous offices he administered for a time to his own great credit and the still greater benefit of others; but as he was too much disturbed in his devotions, he resigned his office and took a parish, with the intention to dedicate his time not only to the salvation of souls, but also to the contemplation of the divine mysteries, and to the care of his own spiritual progress. He led a very austere life, wore constantly a hair-shirt, kept a rigorous fast, and partook of nothing but bread and water on the fast-days ordained by the Church. In the middle of the night he arose to pray, rested but a few hours and only on the bare floor, with a stone or a book for his pillow. He passed many hours in prayer and devout reading. The flock in his charge he attended like a true shepherd. He preached with great zeal, encouraged his hearers with fervor to do good, and restrained them with all his power from evil.

But what made St. Ivo most acceptable in the sight of God and man, was his great compassion for the indigent, and his more than fatherly solicitude for widows and orphans, as well as for the poor persons who were at law with the government or had other similar affairs, but who could not, on account of their poverty, engage an advocate to prepare their writings and carry on their suits. Without asking or taking from them the smallest fee, he prepared their writings, conducted their processes, appeared before the judges, and took more pains with their affairs than with his own. The principal reason, he said, which actuated him to do this was the commandment of charity: "Do to others as you wish they should do to you." In many other ways St. Ivo gave evidence of his love for his neighbor. His income he used for no other purpose than to adorn his church and to comfort the poor. His door was always open for the latter, and everything in his house was at their disposal. He received them with

the greatest kindness, washed their feet and gave them all they needed. God manifested on many occasions His approbation of such acts of charity. One day, all the provision the Saint possessed consisted of a loaf of bread, but he ordered that all who asked alms should receive of it; and God so miraculously increased this one loaf, that for a long time it sufficed to nourish him and the poor. On another occasion, his housekeeper told him that there was no more corn in the granary; as, however, at the same time a poor man came to beg for some corn, St. Ivo sent his housekeeper to the granary, saying that he would surely find as much as this poor man needed. The housekeeper obeyed, and found to his great astonishment the whole granary filled with corn, where but a short time previous not a grain was to be seen. A beggar asked alms of the Saint, in the street: as however, he had nothing with him to give, and yet did not wish to send the poor man away without something, he gave him the hat from his head, which was gratefully received. After the Saint had gone through several streets, he perceived that he was covered with a much better hat, than the one he had given away, and doubted not that our Lord had done this grace to him. At another time, when the Saint was at dinner, a beggar, clad in rags, came to him and asked alms. The Saint invited him to sit down, and, giving him his own food, kindly requested him to eat. The beggar, having slightly partaken, rose from the table, and saying: "Peace be with thee!" changed into a bright and radiant being, and suddenly disappeared from the eyes of St. Ivo. At another time, when the compassionate Saint took his dinner among the poor, a most beautiful white dove was seen flying over his head. The same happened in the church at Treguier, where the whole building was illuminated by the light which emanated from the heavenly dove.

St. Ivo was also graced by God with power to extinguish conflagrations, to heal the sick, and to relieve the possessed, which gained him the highest regard of every one. Still greater were the miracles wrought after his death at his tomb. During his last sickness, the Saint would not permit the least thing to be done to mitigate his pain or to refresh him, but after having received extreme unction, he remained lying on his bed, that is, the hard floor on which some straw had been strewn. There he remained in pious contemplation until May nineteenth, when his soul went to heaven. Oh! that our gracious Lord would send, for the comfort of the poor, many imitators of this Saint!

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Peter Celestine dared not, during a long period, offer the divine sacrifice in consideration of the infinite Majesty of God and his own unworthiness. Being admonished, however, by his confessor, he offered it daily, to his own great comfort. There are persons too scrupulous to receive Holy Communion. They fear that they are not worthy to receive it frequently. The thought of the great majesty of the Almighty and their own nothingness prevents them; while others, who are accustomed to go often to Holy Communion have too little reverence, and think either not at all, or not enough, of the greatness of the mystery of which they partake, and of their own unworthiness. These actions do not show that they are impressed with the Majesty of the Most High. Their preparation is lukewarm, without attention, without devotion. Both the too scrupulous and the too confident do great wrong. The latter ought to know that the frequent receiving of Holy Communion ought not to lessen but to augment their reverence. If we go often to Holy Communion we should not, therefore, take less time or be less fervent in the preparation for it: on the contrary, the devotion ought to be greater in consideration of our privilege of receiving it frequently. The former, however, ought to know that the scruples which, under the pretext, that they are not worthy, prevent them from partaking frequently of the Holy Sacrament, do not come from God. It is right that we humble ourselves before the divine Majesty, and that we consider ourselves not worthy of such a grace; but we ought also to be encouraged in contemplating the measureless love and kindness of

Christ; and the thought of our own poverty ought to excite in us a burning desire for this heavenly bread. If you wish to wait for Holy Communion until you are worthy of it, tell me, when will the day come on which you can partake of it? Act as you think you ought. Cleanse carefully your conscience: ornament your soul with virtues: prepare yourself with great zeal, and then go to the Lord's table with lively faith, firm hope, burning love, and the deepest reverence; and go as often as your confessor gives you permission. "Do what is your duty," says Thomas à Kempis, "and do it with proper care; not because you are accustomed to it, not because you are forced: but receive the Most Holy Body of our dear Lord with humility and reverence."

II. St. Ivo exercised himself in charity towards his neighbors, by pleading as an advocate for widows, orphans, and other poor persons, without accepting or demanding any fee for his labor. In our day, there are many who ask not only three-fold pay for what they do for such unfortunate beings, but who, in manifold ways, aid in crushing them still more, and thus become guilty of one of those sins which, on account of their wickedness, cry to Heaven for vengeance. Listen to what Holy Writ says of those who thus wrong the poor, the widow, and the orphan: "Woe to them that make wicked laws: and when they write, write injustice; to oppress the poor in judgment, and do violence to the cause of the lowly of my people. What will you do in the day of visitation, and of the calamity which cometh from afar? To whom will ye flee for help?"

(Isaias X.)? And again it is said: "They have not judged the cause of the widow, they have not managed the cause of the fatherless, and they have not judged the judgment of the poor. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Or shall not my soul take revenge on such a nation?" The punishment and the vengeance of God will not fail to come down upon such unmerciful and unjust advocates, counsellors, and judges. Christ, our Lord, says of the Pharisees and Scribes: "these shall receive greater damnation" (Luke XX.). Why? Because they swallow the houses of the widows under the pretext of prayers. The same divine threat is addressed to those lawyers, counsellors, commissaries, judges, &c., who, under the pretext of justice, deprive widows, orphans, or others, of house and home, fields and meadows, their inheritance; in fine, of all that they possess. They take all this from them and swallow it to their own eternal destruction; for the time will come when, first, those words of the prophet Job will become true: "The riches, which he has swallowed, he shall vomit up, and God shall draw them out of his belly" (Job XX.); secondly, those words of St. Luke: "These shall receive greater damnation;" greater than the known thieves and robbers, because we can guard ourselves against the latter much better than against the former. You, my reader, may not be able to act as advocate for the poor, like St. Ivo; but can you not sometimes speak a kind word for them? Can you not assist them in other ways? Can you not at least pray for those widows, orphans and poor people who are unjustly oppressed; that God may deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, and send them a merciful Ivo, a just advocate, a just judge? Act according to your means and station, and do to others as you wish they should do to you. "According to thy ability stretch out thy hand, and give to the poor" (Eccl. i. 14).

TWENTIETH DAY OF MAY.

ST. BERNARDIN OF SIENNA, CONFESSOR.

St. Bernardin, of whom the Roman Martyrology says that he was a light to all Italy, by his teachings and his holy example, was born at Massa, in the republic of Sienna, in the year 1380. He became an orphan early in life and a pious aunt took charge of him and educated him in the fear of the Lord. His only pleasure in boyhood consisted in praying, studying, and going to Church. He used to repeat to other boys the sermons that he had heard with so much ability that he even astonished older people. All his words and actions evinced great inclination to retirement and a truly angelic purity. No indecent word was ever heard to pass his lips, and he was so well known for his modesty, that when his school-mates conversed in too unrestrain-

ed a manner and only saw Bernardin far off, they immediately interrupted their conversation, saying: "Hush hush! Bernardin is coming." A grown man, who was not ashamed to speak indecently, he slapped in the face. Against another, who persisted in indecent discourse, he assembled all his young companions and pelted him with dirt until he was obliged to flee from the town. Diana, his aunt, had a very pious daughter, named Tobia, whom Bernardin sometimes visited in order to receive religious instructions. One day, he told her he had fallen deeply in love with a most beautiful virgin, and that he had no peace day or night, unless he had paid her a daily visit. The pious Tobia, not a little shocked at this speech, said nothing, but followed him when he left the house, to ascertain who this virgin was, and where she lived. She soon saw, to her great comfort, that it was no other than the Virgin Mother, of whom an exceedingly beautiful image stood on one of the city gates. To her Bernardin went daily to say his prayers on bended knees. He confessed also, later, to Tobia, that it was she, the Blessed Virgin, to whom he was thus devoted and whom he daily requested to guard him from all danger and keep him spotless and pure. To this end he also fasted every Saturday and did other good works. When he had reached his twentieth year, he nursed, during four months, in the hospital, persons who were infected with a frightful pestilence, and also persuaded others fearlessly to follow his example. Two years later, he distributed his fortune among the poor, and entered the Seraphic order of St. Francis, to which he was called in a vision. Two years after he had taken the vows, his superior appointed him preacher, which duty he discharged almost to his death. He generally preached daily, sometimes oftener, and always with such zeal and fervor that he was called the Apostle of Italy. Everywhere the people desired to hear him, and he had to go from one town to another. The number of those who came to listen to his sermons was often so large, that the churches could not contain them, and he had to preach in the open air. He spoke fearlessly and with great success against public abuses and vices. In a certain town he represented so energetically the evils which arose from the use of dice and immoderate card-playing, that no one could be found in the whole city who would touch either dice or cards. A tradesman, who had earned his living by making such articles, complained to the Saint that he had thus lost his livelihood. Bernardin, admonishing him to trust in God, advised him to paint, or represent in some other manner, the holy Name of Jesus and put it up for sale, as the Saint, in many of his sermons recommended, his hearers to honor and invoke this holy Name, which he himself always car-

ried with him upon a tablet. The tradesman followed the advice, and afterwards said that he had gained more by it than formerly by his dice and cards. Besides his sermons, St. Bernardin did much good in the cloisters. He restored among their occupants the first rules of the Seraphic founder and wonderfully increased the number of the members.

To relate all the virtues of this Saint would fill volumes. Among them shone most brilliantly, his humility, his patience and his purity. Three important bishoprics were offered to him: one of them even by the Pope: he, however, firmly refused these dignities, saying, that he believed he could do more good by preaching. More than once he was accused of heresy to the authorities and even to the Pope. Those, whose vices he attacked in his sermons, slandered and persecuted him most violently, but without being able to disturb him or make him impatient. He refuted the false accusations and left the rest to God. The first time he walked in the streets of Sienna with his beggar's bag, some boys ran after him and his companion, deriding them and pelting them with mud and stones. His companion began to murmur, but the Saint said: "Brother, let the children enjoy themselves; they assist us thus in earning by patience the kingdom of God." When he was gathering alms at Sienna, a noble lady called him into her house. The Saint, of course, supposed that she would bestow upon him a rich alms, but was soon convinced that he had been mistaken. The impudent woman dared to make shameless advances to the chaste man, threatening him that in case he refused to comply with her wishes, she would call loudly for help and say that he wished to do violence to her. Bernardin became pale with fear, and not knowing how to escape the danger, he raised his eyes to heaven and begged for help. Suddenly he drew out a sharp scourge, which he carried with him and applied it so well upon the indecently clothed woman, that she quickly changed her mind. In this manner he saved his purity.

We pass in silence many other examples of his virtues, as obedience, mortification, love of God and his neighbor, fervor in prayers, and devotion to the Virgin Mother. We will only say a few words of his happy end. He was on his way to Naples, where he was going to preach. Not far from the town of Aquila, a serious illness seized him. St. Celestine, the Guardian Saint of the town, appeared to him and informed him that his last hour was approaching. Bernardin was rejoiced at this message, and after having received the Holy Sacraments with great devotion, he requested to be laid on the floor which was strewn with ashes. Raising his eyes to heaven, with a cheerful countenance, he gave

his soul into the hands of Him whom he had so constantly served upon earth, and whom he had so zealously endeavored to make known. He was canonized six years after his death, on account of the many miracles which God wrought by his intercession.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Bernardin was an enemy of indecent discourse. Therefore not only did he never utter an immodest word, but he prevented others from so doing. He endeavored earnestly to work out his own salvation. If you are as earnest, follow his example. In our time nothing is more common than to speak without shame or restraint of what is impure. Hence it is that works of iniquity become so prevalent that hell will be filled with those who perpetrate them. St. Gregory, who compares unchaste discourse with pestilence, was right in saying, that most people who go to eternal destruction, are brought to it by the vice of impurity. This he verifies by the words of the Gospel: "And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left" (Math. xxv.). Why, asked the holy Father, are all the damned called by the name of goats? For no other reason than to show that most people are damned for the vice of lust, of which that animal is the type. Whoever earnestly desires to be placed "on His right hand," must shun this vice. And that he may be able to shun it, he must guard himself against every indecent word; for evil words lead to evil works, besides being in themselves sinful. Licentious young men discontinued their conversations as soon as they saw St. Bernardin. Should not the thought of the presence of the Most High, of Him who has the power to send you to eternal des-

truction, produce the same effect upon you?

II. St. Bernardin preached most energetically against gaming with dice and cards. The holy Fathers have done the same. St. Cyprian maintained that gambling was an invention of the devil, and said: "Thou, who playest with dice, callest thyself a Christian, which however, thou art not. Thou canst not be a friend of Christ, when thou hast contracted friendship with His enemy." It is true, that, in itself, playing with dice and cards is no sin; but it is also true that we commit sin when we play immoderately, or with evil intentions, or are led to neglect the duties of our station. It is also true that such gambling gives opportunities for other sins, as lying, defrauding, stealing, quarreling, cursing and blaspheming, as experience unhappily teaches. And who dares to say that one can waste so much valuable time in gambling, without committing sin, or without being obliged to render one day an account of it before the judgment-seat of the Almighty? St. Anthony says, "Oh how will they render an account of their time, who have been occupied whole days and even whole nights in gambling; not only losing their own time, but being instrumental to the loss of it which others sustain?" Happy they, who on their deathbed can exclaim with the holy Sara: "Never have I joined myself with them that play" (Job iii.).

TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF MAY.

ST. PACHOMIUS, HERMIT.

St. Pachomius, the celebrated instructor and father of numerous hermits, was born in Upper Thebais, about the year 278, of pagan parents. While yet a child it was clearly seen that God intended to draw him away from paganism; for, no sooner had he been carried during the time of sacrifice, into the heathen temple, than the idols became silent, and the idolatrous priests, who were to offer the sacrifice, were greatly disturbed and knew not how to act. When they gave to the little child some of the wine which was offered to the idols, he was unable to retain it, although he had been educated by his parents according to their manner of thinking and was well instructed in all the pagan sciences. At the age of twenty, he was forced to go, with others of his own station, into the war. During their march, these newly enlisted soldiers came into the neighborhood of a Christian city. They fell short of provisions, and several of them became sick. On being informed of this, the Christian inhabitants of that city voluntarily brought bread and other food to the soldiers, and manifesting great compassion for them, they nursed the sick with tender care. Pachomius, astonished at this, asked who these were who evinced so much interest in strangers. He received for answer, that they were Christians. "What is their belief?" asked he further, "what are their actions, and why do they show to us so much kindness?" They explained to him as much of the Christian faith as the shortness of the time permitted, telling him that the Christians, for such deeds of kindness, expected an eternal reward in heaven. Pachomius, whose heart was touched by divine grace, conceived instantly a fervent desire to learn more of this faith, concluding rightly that such a religion must be holy, and instituted by the true God, since it inspired people with such active and pious charity. He therefore determined to seek instruction in this religion after the campaign and to become a Christian.

This resolution he faithfully kept. The first night after he had been baptized, it seemed to him in his sleep as if he saw dew fall from above upon his hands and change into sweet honey. At the same time he heard a voice saying: "Pachomius, observe the mysteries which are going on in your hand. This dew changing into sweet honey signifies the grace which you have received from Christ. Be careful in guarding it." Pachomius awoke, and feeling an intense love for God and an aver

sion to all earthly things, he resolved to leave everything, in order to serve God alone. Having been informed that a great servant of the Almighty, named Palæmon, lived in a desert, leading a most holy life, he repaired to him and requested to be accepted as his disciple. Palæmon at first refused to consent and representing to him the severity of a hermit's life, added that he did not believe that Pachomius could endure it. Pachomius, however, replied undauntedly: "I trust in God, who has sent me to thee, and who will also favor me with strength and perseverance." Seeing his earnestness, Palæmon received him and invested him with the habit. The new hermit evinced in all he did an uncommon zeal. No fast, no penance, no labor was too heavy; no watching, no praying too long for him. He practised all virtues so perfectly, that his holy teacher was greatly amazed. One day, when Pachomius was sent into the desert of Tabenna, God admonished him to build a monastery there for those who would come to him, and to lead them in the path of salvation. There appeared also an angel, who gave him a tablet upon which the rules were written by which he and the others should regulate their lives. When Pachomius, returning to his teacher, informed him of the command which he had received from on high, and asked his advice, Palæmon counselled him to obey the voice of God without loss of time. Hence Pachomius repaired with his brother, John, who had meanwhile joined him, to the place indicated. As soon as they had reached it, they began to build the monastery, which consisted of many small huts. In the course of time, however, there came so many from divers places, who wished to live under the direction of St. Pachomius, that they had to build several of these convents, and at last almost filled the desert with them. It is authentic that before St. Pachomius departed this life, nearly 20,000 hermits lived in this desert. They were distributed into 24 divisions, after the letters of the alphabet, and each had a superior, but all under the general government of St. Pachomius. Many of the other sex came also, who desired to live a religious life. His holy sister was the first. The Saint gave them all the most salutary instructions, and laid before them the rules which he had received from the angel. To work and pray, to sing Psalms, and to praise God, to meditate, to fast and to mortify the body, was their only occupation.

Pachomius was an example to all. He was the strictest in fasting, the most fervent in prayer, the most diligent at work, and in all things the most humble and patient. His nourishment was bread, wild herbs and water. He never divested himself of his hair-shirt which reached to his knees. During fifteen years

he never took his short rest lying down, but sitting on a stone without anything to lean upon. He prayed generally with outstretched arms, and very often all night; but his heart was so filled with heavenly comfort, that the night proved too short for him, and when morning came, he complained, as we read that St. Anthony did, that the sun had risen so early and disturbed his prayers. God caused His faithful servant to gain a high reputation far and near, not only on account of the sanctity of his life, but also from the gifts of working miracles and of prophecy, with both of which he was graced. In order that he should remain humble, the Almighty permitted that he should be at times tormented with the most abominable temptations. When this affliction came upon him, St. Pachomius took refuge in prayer and mortification, and in this manner, by the aid of heaven, he always conquered the evil spirit. At last, exhausted by his many penances, cares and labors, he was taken sick with an incurable disease. As soon as he perceived that his end was near, he prepared himself for it by most devoutly receiving the holy Sacraments, after which, all those under him came, one by one, to receive his parting instructions. Among other things, he cautioned them not to associate with heretics, and to shun heretical books as they would deadly poison. After this, he joyfully gave his soul into the hands of Him whom he had so long and so faithfully served. It is said that he had reached the age of 110 years. This holy man left behind him an almost incredibly large number of disciples who lived after his example under the rules that he had received from an angel. Many of them had been called to the desert in an extraordinary manner, and gave bright examples of their constancy. Of only one of these, Theodore, will I say a few words. He was the son of noble parents and had just reached his 14th year, when, by the peculiar grace of God, he meditated upon the high regard that his family enjoyed, and the riches, honor and pleasures which one day would be his. But he also thought of the short space during which he could enjoy them, and of what would follow. After long consideration, he exclaimed: "Woe be to me! What comfort will my happiness, honor, joy and delight give me, when my last hour shall come? It is impossible to be happy in this world and also in the other, and to enjoy, after the pleasures of this life, those of heaven." Sinking on his knees, he begged God fervently to give him the grace to learn what path he should walk, in order to gain the happiness of heaven. God imparted to him the knowledge he desired, and Theodore determined to regulate his life in accordance with it. He went to St. Pachomius, and requested to be admitted among his disciples. Although

the Saint, in consideration of the tender age of Theodore, hesitated to grant his wish, he was at length persuaded by the perseverance of the youth, and received him. Theodore manifested a manly zeal in his new life, and continued thus unwaveringly. He gave a splendid example of constancy, when his mother came to St. Pachomius and demanded that her son should return to her. Theodore even refused to see her, sending her a message that his resolution was fixed to remain where he was in order to obtain everlasting happiness, which he despaired of gaining at home, surrounded by worldly riches, honors and pleasures. His mother impressed his words so deeply on her heart, that she also determined to leave all her temporal possessions and honors, and entered upon the life of a recluse.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Pachomius passed whole nights in prayer, and, so far from being wearied by it, he complained of the shortness of the night. Why is it that you are so soon sleepy and weary when you at night examine your conscience or pray? Why does the time of Holy Mass, of a sermon or other devotional duty, seem so long to you? Cannot Christ, our Lord, give you the same reproof, which he gave to his disciples upon the mount of Olives: "What! could ye not watch one hour with me?" (Matt. chap. xxvi.) When the disciples were fishing during the night, they were wide awake and no sleep fell on them; but when the Lord commanded them to watch and pray so that they might not fall into temptation, they were soon tired of praying, and slept. Is not this the case with many children of the world, among whom you also belong? They pass many hours, nay, even whole nights in gaming, dancing, or in some other manner, without becoming weary or sleepy. Time does not seem to pass heavily then. If, however, we pray, read devout books, or do other pious exercises, then the time drags slowly, we become weary, and we drop to sleep.

With Christ we cannot watch one hour, but with the world, with Satan, whole nights. Take shame to yourselves before God, and make the resolution to attend in future, with cheerfulness and zeal, to your prayers and other pious exercises; as otherwise, I fear it will go with you as with the disciples, who, because they did not pray with more fervor, fell into temptation and succumbed so far, that they all forsook our Lord, and Peter even denied Him three times.

II. Pachomius was admonished, the first night after having received holy baptism, to guard carefully the grace he had received from Christ. He did so; he never committed a mortal sin, and therefore, instead of losing grace, he augmented it by doing good works. The same admonition was given to you after holy baptism; for, when the priest offered to you the white robe, he said: "Take this white robe and carry it spotless to the judgment-seat of God." Have you followed this admonition as St. Pachomius did? Alas! when you committed your first mortal sin, you lost the sanctifying grace which you had received from God, and soiled the white robe of your innocence.

But you confessed your sin and thus regained the lost grace. Have you since then carefully guarded it until this hour? There are many, who, soon after having been to confession, lose their grace again wantonly and soil their soul, hardly cleansed, with the mire of new evil. And thus they go on, from one confession to another, from one year to another. But is this not mocking the Almighty? is it not loving sin and Satan more than God, and leading one's soul wilfully into eternal destruction? In confession you repent of your evil doings, beg the forgiveness of God, and promise rather to die than to do wrong. Soon after, you commit again what you have just repented of, and for which you have asked the pardon of Almighty God, and thus you offend him anew. This is surely telling lies to God and mocking him. If your neighbor treated you in a similar manner, to-day asking your pardon for a wrong done you, and to-morrow renewing this wrong; would you not say that he mocked you and told lies to you? By confession you drive sin and Satan out of your heart as your worst enemies, and prepare a dwelling in it for God. Soon after, you recall by new wrongs the Evil one and drive away your Lord, clearly showing that you love Satan more than your God, or that you repent of having driven Satan away. Is it possible to imagine anything more astonishing, anything more worthy of condemnation? In confession you cleanse your soul from the horrible spots of sin; and soon after, you soil it again most abominably, and act like "the sow that was washed and returns to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter, ii). Can there be any thing more insensate then thus to act with your precious, your immortal soul? Take heed that you do not continue to treat, in this manner, either God or your soul. When you have regained, by confession, the grace of the Almighty, guard it carefully and do not forfeit it again by new sins; otherwise, woe to you! Holy Writ says: "And him that passeth over from justice to sin, God has prepared for the sword" (Eccl. xxvi.)

TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF MAY.

ST. JULIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

St. Julia was born in the famous city of Carthage, of noble parents. She was so piously educated in the Catholic faith, that she stood high in the esteem of all the inhabitants of the city on account of her virtues. When Genseric, king of the Vandals, who was an Arian and a sworn enemy of the Catholics, had taken the city, he not only gave the Catholic Churches to the Arians, but sacked the city, took the citizens and senators into bondage, drove the clergy away and sold the women, especially those who were unmarried, to the pagans as slaves. Among these was the virtuous Julia. She became the property of a pagan merchant, named Eusebius, and was taken by

him to Syria. It seemed at first almost impossible to her, that she, a noble, tenderly nurtured girl, should be a slave to a pagan and be employed in the meanest work. But she soon resigned herself to the decrees of Providence, consoled herself with the example of our Saviour, who for us took the form of a servant. She thought, in all her trials, of His bitter sufferings and cruel death, and wore the image of the crucified Saviour constantly upon her breast. The work that was given her she performed with great diligence; she was faithful in the smallest things, obeyed her master unhesitatingly, and was so polite and kind to all, that she was soon respected and beloved by every one. Her master said repeatedly, that he would rather lose all he possessed than this slave. The time left to her from her work she employed only in prayer and devout reading; for she had taken several pious books with her, and received others from the Christians in Syria. These encouraged her in such a manner, that she was never seen sad, but always cheerful and bright. Her purity she kept undefiled in the midst of dissipated heathens; as her angelic chastity allowed no one to speak even an obscene word to her. Though abundantly supplied, she was very temperate in eating, frequently fasted on water and bread, and voluntarily mortified her body with severe penances. Eusebius, her master, told her often not to torture her body thus, but to allow herself some comfort; but she permitted nothing to disturb her in her pious way of living. One day, when he asked her why she led so austere a life, she replied: "I seek to serve God, to please Him, and to gain His favor, that on the day of judgment He may not cast me from His side."

After several years passed by Julia in this manner, Eusebius had to go to the island of Corsica. He took Julia, his valuable slave, with him. The pagan inhabitants of the island were just celebrating a grand festival in honor of their idols, when Eusebius arrived. As a pagan, he went with his servants to the temple of the idols and assisted at the sacrifice. Julia, however, remained on board the ship, and prayed and shed many tears over the blindness of the heathens. While she was praying, several servants of the Governor of the island came to see the ship; and seeing Julia, they asked her why she had not accompanied her master to the temple. She answered: "I am a Christian, and I sacrifice to the only true God, not to your idols which are not worthy of being honored." The servants immediately reported this answer to their master, the Governor, whose name was Felix. He at once called Eusebius to him, and asked him who the person was whom he had in his ship, and who dared to despise the idols of the island? "She is a Christian, whom I have long vainly endeavored to divert from her faith; but I es-

teem her nevertheless highly, on account of her fidelity and great intelligence." Felix, an implacable enemy of the Christians, said with great emphasis to Eusebius: "You ought either to dismiss her, or induce her to sacrifice to our Gods." "The first," replied Eusebius, "I will not do; and the second is not in my power. It will be most advisable to let her alone." "No," said Felix, "give her to me. I will pay you whatever you ask, or I will give you four slaves in exchange for her." "Neither proposition can I accept," replied Eusebius; "for she is more valuable to me than all your slaves." Seeing that he could not prevail on Eusebius with words, Felix gave him a banquet, pressed him to drink until he was intoxicated; and then sending his servants to the ship, he had Julia seized and brought before him. At first he praised her beauty and exquisite natural gifts, pitied her condition as a slave, and promised to free her and see her well married, if she would worship the gods of the island. Julia said fearlessly: "I am satisfied with my station and seek upon earth no other happiness. I desire no bridegroom here, for I possess one in heaven. But as far as your gods are concerned, know that I recognize no other God but the only true God of the Christians." Angry at these words, Felix ordered her to be struck in the face until the blood streamed out of her mouth and nose. "My Redeemer," said Julia, "was struck in the face and suffered out of love to me. How great an honor is it to me, that I may humbly imitate Him in something!" The tyrant then ordered her to be put upon the rack and most cruelly scourged. Again, calling to mind the sufferings of Christ, she exclaimed: "My Lord bore still more suffering during his painful scourging and crowning with thorns." Felix said to her during her martyrdom: "Renounce the faith of Christ and they shall cease to torture you." "No," replied Julia, "that shall never be, even if I should be crucified, like my dear Lord." "Well then," replied Felix, "we shall see if thou hast spoken the truth." He then gave the order to fasten Julia upon a cross, and thus to let her die like her Christ. The order was executed. Julia was cruelly fastened with nails upon the cross, and then raised high up with it. Words fail to describe the delight of the virgin, whom God strengthened, when she first saw the cross. She confessed publicly that she considered it the highest grace that she was permitted to die the same death which her Saviour had suffered. Calling on Christ for help and strength, she offered to Him as a sacrifice all her martyrdom, her life and her blood. She did not forget, after the example of Christ, to pray for her executioners; and having, for several hours, hung upon the cross amid inexpressible sufferings, but still with a smiling countenance, and

sending sighs of love to heaven, she at last resigned her heroic soul into the keeping of the Most High. Those present saw, with great astonishment, at the moment that she expired, a beautiful, bright, shining, white dove come out of her mouth and soar happily towards heaven. Her holy remains were taken from the cross by the monks of the neighboring islands, who had been admonished to this act by an angel, and were buried with great solemnity.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Julia, sought to serve God, to please him and to gain his favor, that, on the day of the last judgment, she might not be eternally cast off by Him. On that day the Divine Judge will pass sentence upon all men. To the pious He will say: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." To the godless He will say: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the Devil and his angels." The good He will take with Him into heaven, but the wicked He will cast for ever into hell. Whoever believes this, ought to strive with all his might, to obtain the grace of the great Judge. You believe it because God has revealed it. Why then have you not hitherto been more zealous in obtaining his grace? How have you dared to offend him so often and so grievously? Is it possible to think of a more foolish action, of more inexcusable wickedness than to make Him your enemy, who you believe, has the power to condemn you eternally? If there were two judges to pass sentence upon you, and you offended one of them but not the other, your foolishness and wickedness would not be so great. You might expect of the other, grace and mercy. But knowing that there is only one Judge who can open the gates of heaven for you, or precipitate you for ever into

hell—tell me, is it not incomprehensible that you so wantonly offend this your only Judge and thus raise His wrath? Acknowledge, I entreat you, your evil doings and let your tears wipe out your guilt. Endeavor to obtain, by all possible means, the favor of your Judge and seek to reconcile Him by true penance. "Before the judgment-day, He may be appeased," says St. Gregory, "but not during the judgment." Watch yourself carefully that in future you may never again in the least offend him. He is your Judge and can for ever cast you into the fire of hell.

II. St. Julia considered it an honor, and manifested great joy, that she, by being struck in the face, cruelly scourged and finally crucified should become conformable to Christ, Our Lord, after whose example, she also prayed upon the cross for her executioners. To become conformable to Christ is a sign that one belongs to the Lord's Elect; and therefore St. Julia had reason to rejoice in her martyrdom. Have you hitherto endeavored to become conformable to your Saviour? In what is your life conformable with his? Consider: Christ the Lord was obedient to His holy Mother and to his holy foster-father. He was obedient to His Heavenly Father, until his death upon the cross. You are neither obedient to God, your father, nor to the Church, your

mother, as you transgress as well the commandments of God as those of the Church. Christ was meek and humble of heart. You are harsh to your neighbor, proud and conceited in your thoughts. Christ was so devoted to prayer, that he gave whole nights to it, with the greatest reverence towards his Heavenly Father. You refuse to pray even during the day; and when you pray, it is without devotion, without attention and without reverence. Christ fasted forty days and nights without interruption; you complain when bid to fast, or to abstain from certain food. Christ suffered, with wonderful patience, shame and wrong, disgraceful imprisonment, painful scourging, derisive crowning, terrible crucifixion and at last a most ignominious death. You, on the other hand, are impatient if only an unkind word be

spoken to you, or if you have to suffer the shadow of a wrong. In sickness, persecution or adversity, you give way to the most improper expressions against God and men. Christ pardoned his enemies and prayed for them on the cross. You demand to be revenged on your enemies, nourish hatred against them in your heart, wish them all possible evil, and do not pardon them freely. Do you call this your conformity to Christ? Alas! if you continue in this manner, you will not belong to the Elect, for the words of the holy Apostle contain infallible truth: "For whom God foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son" (Romans viii.). Begin at once and endeavor to become conformable to Christ and to imitate Him in all His virtues.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF MAY.

ST. GODARD, BISHOP OF HILDESHEIM.

St. Godard was a native of Bittenbach, a village not far from the ancient convent of Altach, in Bavaria. He manifested, while yet in early youth, a great inclination to piety and learning, which prompted his pious parents to give him in charge of the religious of the above named convent, that he might be instructed as well in virtue as in science. Godard made in both such rapid progress that all the religious loved and esteemed him. Frederic, Archbishop of Salzburg, visited the monastery and having become acquainted with the unusual talents of Godard, took him to his country and after having had him instructed in all the higher branches of knowledge, he sent him back again to Altach. The religious rejoiced at his return; for they promised themselves much from so pious and learned a man, and soon found that they had not raised their expectations too high. Still greater became their joy, when Godard desired to be admitted among their number, to which they gladly assented. The new brother endeavored to fulfil most punctually all the rules of the order, and aspired with great

earnestness after spiritual perfection. During the course of a few years, he made such surprising progress, that, after the death of the Abbot, he was chosen his successor. Loath as he was to submit to the choice, he was, however, conscientious in administering the functions of his new office, which he kept for seven years, to the great benefit of all the religious under him, who loved and honored him as a father. After this period, the Saint at the request of St. Willigisius, Archbishop of Mainz, and of the holy Emperor Henry, had to take the government of the Monastery of Hirschfeld, and there restore the neglected rules of the order. Godard fulfilled his task with great success, as well by his own example as by his wise admonitions; he even led those in his charge to such perfection in all virtues that several of them departed this life in the odor of sanctity. After having finished this important mission, the Saint returned to his beloved Altach, as he desired to labor for his own salvation and to serve the Almighty in peaceful solitude. Having lived thus quietly a few years, God revealed to him in a vision that he would soon be obliged to take the government of a bishopric; which in truth took place. After the death of the bishop of Hildesheim, the clergy, as well as the emperor, would have no one for his successor but Godard. The humble servant of the Almighty refused as long as possible, but being in another vision assured that it was the will of God, he consented to be consecrated bishop and entered upon his office. With how great zeal and how much care he discharged his duties unto his end, we may conclude from his former fervor and unweariedness. The honor of God and the salvation of the flock entrusted to him were the only objects of his thoughts, words and actions. To this end tended all his prayers, his fasting, his frequent preaching his exhortations and all his other virtuous deeds. He built many new churches, and renovated or beautified others which were old and dilapidated. He loved above all things to embellish the house of God, and desired to see everything in it, not only clean, but beautiful. Hence he endeavored to prevent all improprieties sometimes committed by godless people in holy places. All those ceremonies which the church prescribes, at stated periods during the year, he performed with great magnificence, because he knew that they are ordained by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that they add much to the esteem of the true religion and to the fervor of devotion. Towards the poor, whom he regarded as the living temple of the Most High, he showed himself as a careful father or as a tender mother. No one came to him that he did not endeavor to assist. The greater part of his income he spent for the comfort of the needy. The education of the young was a source of great

solicitude to him, and he spared neither trouble nor labor in teaching them, and in exhorting their parents to bestow their utmost care in bringing up their children, considering that the temporal, as well as spiritual welfare of a country depends mostly on the rearing of the young. Not less was he anxious for the well-being of all others in his charge, to whatever class of society they might belong; as his only desire was that they all should know, honor and love God Almighty.

How much good Godard effected by his holy and untiring labor, may easily be imagined. All this was greatly enhanced by the gifts of miracles and prophecy which God bestowed upon his faithful servant. He drove the Evil Spirit out of the possessed, cured long-standing disease of the eyes by simply making the sign of the Cross; and healed dangerous sicknesses. It is also known that he raised several that were dead, to life. Among these was a youth who had been drowned while trying to cross a river in a small boat during a storm. Three hours later, the waves washed the dead body on the shore, whence it was carried home. The bereaved mother of the youth was inconsolable, and perceiving St. Godard, who was just passing the house, she ran towards him weeping, and casting herself at his feet, implored him to restore by his prayers the life of her son. The saint, after having said a short prayer, went to the dead youth, and taking his hand, said: "Young man, I say to thee, arise!" And, as in times long past the dead youth of Naim, when the same words were pronounced by the Saviour, raised himself on his bier and lived, so also did this one obey the words of the faithful servant of Christ. He raised himself and requested the Saint to hear his confession. When this was done, he desired to receive holy communion, and then said to the holy bishop: "Now let me die in peace; for I fear that should I live longer among so many dangers, I should fall again, and go burdened with sin to eternal destruction." "Close then your eyes, my son," said Godard "and rest happily, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The youth replied: "Amen," bowed his head, and expired in the presence of the bishop. To several of his acquaintances the Saint prophesied the hour of their death, as he knew his own by divine revelation.

To his servant, Bruno, he one day said: "My dear Bruno, we shall soon make a voyage to our home." The servant supposed that the bishop intended to go to Bavaria, where he was born; but Godard said: "No, we shall travel to our heavenly home." For this voyage the holy man prepared himself by redoubled zeal in the practice of virtue and deeds of kindness; by greater austerity to his body, and lastly by the most edifying reception of the holy sacraments. A dangerous sickness befell him in the year

1038. In the night of the festival of the Ascension, when the priests went into the Church to sing the office, the bishop, who was confined to his bed, requested that four boys should remain with him and devoutly chant the same office. This was done, and the Saint seemed greatly comforted by it, repeating several verses himself, asking fervently the aid of the Almighty, and repenting most humbly of his sins, as he had been in the habit of doing when he was well. Soon after he ended his holy life while praising the Almighty; and went to continue his song without ceasing in the abode of the Blessed. His servant, Bruno, followed him a few hours later, and as he too had lived in the fear of the Lord, there is reason to believe that he followed the holy bishop into heaven. The body of St. Godard sent forth a most delicious fragrance, and the great number of miracles that took place at his shrine caused his fame to be disseminated over the whole Christian world.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Godard knew the hour of his death and prepared himself most carefully for his end. You are assured that you have to die: for the Apostle says: "It is appointed unto all men once to die." Every man must die. Do you understand? You are a man: you also must die. This you know for certain. But you do not know the day, the hour, the place, nor the manner of your death. There is no day, no hour, in which you may not die; no place where death may not reach you. Have you not therefore much more reason than St. Godard to prepare yourself most carefully for your end, and to keep yourself always in readiness; that your death may not be unhappy? You know that an unhappy death is followed by an unhappy eternity, without any means left even to free yourself from it. A happy death can alone preserve you from an unhappy eternity. Should you, however, die unhappily, you cannot again die happily; and hence you cannot free yourself from the unhappy eternity into

which an unhappy death would cast your soul. I said: if you once die unhappily, you can never more die happily. Why? The Apostle answers this question when he says that, "it is appointed unto all men *once* to die." We die only once, not twice, thrice or still oftener. If our death has been happy, then we are happy for all eternity; unhappy, then we are unhappy for all eternity. The fault we make in dying cannot be corrected, like mistakes we make in other matters. An artist who has made something wrong in painting a picture, can alter it; a general who has lost one battle, can gain another: merchants, artisans, etc., if they make a mistake, can repair it, and generally speaking, can retrieve the loss they may have sustained. But with dying this is impossible; once we have died, the fault can not be repaired, the loss cannot be retrieved; because we cannot die twice. It is true, some persons have died twice, as for instance the youth whom St. Godard raised from the dead, as well as all those recalled

to life by our dear Lord, by the Apostles and other Saints. But these were miracles which happen but very seldom, and I do not suppose that you are foolish enough to imagine, that a miracle will be wrought in your case. Therefore there is nothing left for you but to prepare yourself in time for death, because you can die only once, and also because you know not when and where you will die.

II. St. Godard, in his last hour, called for divine assistance, and by repeating several verses of the Psalms which he had so frequently said during his life, he repented of his sins with great contrition. One who is dying ought before all things to pray for divine assistance and the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, while repenting of his misdeeds. That, however, this exercise may be of benefit to you, my reader, I advise you to accustom yourself to it now while you are yet in health. A perfect contrition for sin consists in repenting of it deeply out of love to God. This in itself contains so great a power, that if the dying were prevented from confessing his sins, though willing and desiring to do so, he would obtain pardon. There are some people who make use of this truth to their own destruction. They wantonly commit sin until their end, imagining that by repenting in their last hour they will receive pardon and escape hell. Is

not that audaciously presuming on God's mercy? And can this presumption end well? Such people ought to know that it is much more difficult than they imagine, for a great sinner to receive pardon in his last hour. Suppose that you have hated a relative many years most bitterly, and loved another just as devotedly would it be easy for you to change suddenly and love the first, while you hated the second? Consider it and then say if it is not very difficult suddenly to love the Almighty whom one has hated and offended by sin, and deeply to hate sin which one has loved more than God. Ah! this is impossible without a special grace from the Most High; and will He, who has been so long and so grievously offended by you, give you this grace? What reason, what right have you to hope this? I may be willing to believe that with your lips you may repent, if time and consciousness are left to you; but where will the heart be? And what will mere words, without true compunction of heart, avail? Let him who desires to be secure, confess his sins while he is in health, and awake in himself at least at night deep contrition for them; and thus he may have reason to hope that he will be contrite in his last hour. "Happy and full of wisdom is he, who endeavors to live as he desires to die," writes Thomas à Kempis.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. DONATIAN AND ST. ROGATIAN, MARTYRS.

Among other glorious martyrs whose memory the Catholic Church honors to-day, are the two brothers, Donatian and Rogatian. They were born at Nantes, in Brittany, of pagan parents, who

educated them in the worship of idols. Almighty God, however, brought them unexpectedly by to the true faith, in which alone is salvation. Donatian was the younger, but the first who left Paganism. In all his actions and words he was careful, grave, and reserved; and at the same time he had great charity for the poor. As soon as he had acquired some knowledge of the Christian faith, he had no rest until he had searched deeper into its teachings, sending unceasing sighs to heaven, and humbly praying for grace to learn what he must do to gain life everlasting. God failed not to bestow upon him the grace he asked, and Donatian resolved to embrace Christianity as the only road leading to heaven. Having been sufficiently instructed, he joyfully received holy baptism, and was thus numbered among the Christians. This was done without the knowledge of his brother. As he, however, loved his brother most devotedly, he endeavored to win him also for Christ. One day when he thought that his brother was in the right mood, he said: "Dear brother, according to the flesh you and I have but one mother, ought we not therefore to have only one according to the spirit? I have chosen, by the grace of God, the Catholic Church for my mother; will you not do the same? If you love me, follow my example, that we may also remain united in heaven. Although I am the younger, it will be no disgrace for you to follow me in this matter." After having represented to his brother the falsity and nothingness of the idols which they had been taught to worship from their youth, he explained to him the principal dogmas of the Christian faith and confirmed their truth with the most convincing reasons.

Rogatian listened patiently, and having carefully considered Donatian's words, and aided by Divine assistance, said: "Yes, dearest brother, I will like you become a Christian, and we will live and die in the same faith." Donatian, on hearing this, was filled with gladness; he gave thanks to God for the grace bestowed, and forthwith commenced to instruct his brother in the articles of faith. Having accomplished this, he sought a priest to baptize Rogatian. The priests at that period kept themselves concealed either in the dwellings of the Christians, or in holes under the earth, on account of the terrible persecution of the Emperor Diocletian. While Donatian was seeking one, a Christian told him that an officer of the Emperor had just arrived with orders to exterminate the whole of Christendom; and that he had already commenced to take the names of those who refused to sacrifice to the idols; hence all that the Christians had to expect was certain death. Donatian was inflamed with eagerness to give his life for the Christian

faith, and he therefore determined not to lose this opportunity. Hastening joyfully to his brother, he said: "Dear brother, you desire to be baptized with water by a priest; I have not yet been able to find one; but an opportunity is offered to you to be baptized in your own blood. I have but one wish, to die for Christ; how are you disposed?" "Exactly as you are," replied Rogatian. While they were yet speaking and encouraging each other to suffer with fortitude, the spies of the Emperor entered the house, and hearing from the lips of the two brothers that they were Christians, they immediately seized them and cast them into a dungeon.

After some time, the imperial officer caused Donatian to be brought before him, but without his brother. He first tried with flatteries and promises, but afterwards with menaces, to induce him to forsake the Christian faith and to worship the idols. "Either renounce your faith" said he "or you will have to endure the most dreadful tortures." "I esteem your threats as little as I do your flatteries and promises," replied St. Donatian; "here is my body; scourge, burn, cut, torture it as much as you like, it will cause me greater happiness, but will never make me forsake my faith." After this fearless confession, they carried Donatian back to prison, and took his brother Rogatian before the tyrant. The latter left nothing untried to persuade Rogatian to return to the worship of the idols, but seeing all was useless, he said: "Will you then voluntarily perish with your brother? If he is obstinate, be you reasonable and obey the command of the Emperor. He will richly reward you." "I shall not perish if I die a Christian," replied Rogatian; "eternal happiness will await me. God forbids me to worship your idols. I owe Him obedience and He will give me an eternal reward, which your Emperor cannot give. Therefore, do not hope that I shall become faithless to Him. I will live and die a Christian."

The tyrant, enraged at such courageous answers, ordered that both brothers should be put upon the rack and tortured most cruelly. The executioners punctually obeyed the command. Both the holy brothers and confessors of Christ were cheerful and courageous under the torture, and praised God with a loud voice. When the executioners were tired, one of them thrust his spear through the bodies of the saints, and they were then beheaded.

Thus ended the glorious martyrdom of these holy brothers, in the reign of the Emperor Diocletian; at which period also many thousand others gave their lives for the Christian faith, as this tyrant, as well as the Emperor Maximian, left nothing

undone to uproot Christianity. In Egypt alone are counted 144,000 persons of all classes, conditions and ages, who in the reign of these tyrants suffered martyrdom on account of their faith; besides 700,000 others who were driven away from their houses into want and misery. I do not mention other countries which were also darkened by the rage of these tyrants. Both, however, experienced that the more they raged against the Christian Church, the stronger it became. The blood of the martyrs became a seed that produced abundant fruit. According to the promise of Christ, the gates of hell are not powerful enough to overwhelm the true Church.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Donation, while yet a pagan, was careful and modest in his words. Already he knew how to bridle his tongue. When, however, he became a Christian, he used it in friendly persuasions in order to acquaint his brother with the truth of the Christian religion and induce him to adopt the same. Both brothers used their tongues to encourage each other to endure the martyrdom which they knew awaited them, and to remain faithful to God, constant in the true faith and finally to praise God in the hour of their terrible suffering. Oh! that you would use your tongue for similar purposes! How much sin would you escape! How much less would be your responsibility before God! Endeavor, at least, from this hour, to use your tongue rightly and be careful in all your words. "Take care that you use your tongue only for the purpose for which God gave it," admonishes St. Chrysostom; and that is, as St. Bonaventure writes: "To praise God, edify your neighbor and to accuse yourself." God himself, as the same St. Chrysostom teaches, desired to instruct us how careful we should be, with our tongue; "therefore he has surrounded it with a double wall, that is, with teeth and lips, in order that we might learn

not to speak too quickly, but to be careful and reserved." "He has also given us only one tongue," writes St. Basil, "while he has given us two ears, two hands and two feet; to show us that we must hear, see and act more than we speak." To this points also the remark of St. Thomas: "God gave to the irrational animals hearing, but speech only to the rational animal, man; to demonstrate that we should speak with reason." "A reasonable, sensible man," says St. Ambrose, "considers, before he opens his lips, what, with whom, where and at what time he will speak." May you, in future, do the same!

II. "God will recompense my obedience to him with an eternal reward," said St. Rogatian, "your Emperor is not able to do this." Heed these words, Christian reader. Neither the world, nor the flesh, nor Satan, can give you an eternal recompense; God alone has the power to do this. Hence, make the same resolution that St. Rogatian made, namely: to remain faithful to God, and not to serve the world, the flesh, nor the devil, but God alone. If you were obliged to serve an earthly master, and the choice was given you either to serve one who gave you but little wages or one who

richly recompensed his servants and after some years took the entire care of them during their whole life, would you hesitate which of the two to serve, or would you choose the former? I do not think so; indeed I am quite sure that without a moment's delay you would seek a place with the latter. Why then do you not do the same when you can serve the Lord of all Lords, who promises to recompense your services richly and for eternity? "There are four masters, says St. Bernard: the flesh, the world, Satan and God; and each of them gives his servants a recompense. The flesh gives a momentary pleasure; the world, a perishable honor; Satan never ending imprisonment; God, our Lord, eternal felicity." Whom will you serve? Whom will you obey? Jesus Christ teaches you in words not to be misunderstood: "The Lord, thy God, shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matth. iv.).

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. GREGORY VII., POPE, AND ST. ZENOBIUS, ARCHBISHOP OF FLORENCE

Gregory VII., Pope of Rome, whom the entire Church honors as a holy man who fearlessly punished vice, and bravely defended the Church, was an native of Suana in Tuscany. Certain signs which were observed in him in his childhood gave promise of his future exalted station and holiness. His garments were often illuminated by a radiant brightness. One day, whilst the child was playing in a carpenter's shop, he laid some shavings upon the ground in such a manner that the words of the 71st Psalm might be distinctly read: "And he shall rule from sea to sea," which was the more astonishing as at that time he knew not even his letters. His first instruction in piety and learning he received at Rome, in a monastery where his uncle was Abbot. Thence he was sent to the celebrated monastery of Cluni, to receive further instruction from St. Odilo. When there, he requested to be received into the order of St. Benedict, and after taking the habit, he led so exemplary a life, that he was elected, a few years later, prior of that monastery. Not long afterwards he became Abbot of the monastery of St. Paul, which was outside the walls of Rome, and was thus made superior of a great many religious. Leo IX. created him Cardinal, and from that time many embassies of great importance, and other weighty affairs were entrusted to him, all of which he concluded with eminent ability, and to the great satisfaction of all concerned.

On the very day on which Pope Alexander II. expired, Gregory, then called Hildebrand, was elected as his successor, by the unanimous voices of the Clergy and the people of Rome.

Gregory wept bitterly over this choice and opposed it as long as possible; but when he had once acquiesced, he made the resolution to discharge to the utmost of his power, the functions of so high an office. This resolution he kept most faithfully. All impartial historians bear witness that, from the time of the Apostles, there had not been a Pope who labored more for the honor of God, suffered more annoyances, or fought more bravely for the liberty of the Church, than this holy man. By means of several councils that he called, he endeavored to reform abuses, hold the Clergy to the observance of the rules of the Church, and restore to the Church the property which had been taken from it by the laity. This drew upon him the hatred of many powerful men. The servants of two of them, forcibly seized the holy Pope, on Christmas day, whilst he stood before the altar, dragged him out of the Church by the hair, and threw him into a dungeon. The whole Roman people protested against this outrage, and soon set the holy Father at liberty. This, however, did not deter him from executing what his office required. When the honor of God, or the liberty and well-being of the Church was concerned he cared for no menaces, no dangers, nor even for death itself.

Many blamed and disapproved of the zeal of the holy Pope; but God approved of it, and manifested His pleasure by many miracles. Among others, it happened that at that time when the Saint said Mass, the whole assembled congregation saw a white dove, which descended from heaven, perched upon his right shoulder, and covered his head with outspread wings; doubtless signifying that the holy Pope in the government of the Church was not led by human wisdom, but by the power of the Holy Ghost. He had nevertheless to sustain indescribable afflictions and persecutions.

In consequence of his excommunication of the Emperor Henry IV., on account of his wickedness and acts of injustice, Rome was besieged; but assisted by the valiant Duke, Robert Guiscard, the Pope escaped to Mount Cassino and at length came to Salerno. Before he left Rome, he extinguished a conflagration caused by the enemy, by only making the sign of the cross. At Salerno he was taken sick and died as he had foretold. His last words were: "I have loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore I die in exile." His holy death took place in the year of our Lord, 1085.

Some historians have charged this holy Pope with many and great vices; but the learned Cardinals Baronius and Bellarmine, have so clearly proved the falsity of these accusations, that every reasonable being must be convinced of the innocence of the

Saint. God Himself made it known to the whole world, as well by the many miracles which were performed through the intercession of the Saint before and after his death, as by the miraculous preservation of his body, which 500 years after his death was found still in a state of perfect preservation.

Beside this celebrated Pope, we will place an equally celebrated bishop of Florence, named Zenobius, a descendant from one of the noblest families of that city. Both of his parents adhered to Paganism, but Zenobius, having arrived at years of discretion, recognized the truth of the Christian religion, and having been instructed in it, was baptized by the Bishop of Florence. Soon after, he persuaded his parents to abjure Paganism, and through holy baptism, enter into Christ's holy Church. To gain our Lord still more souls, he began to study theology diligently, and by the aid of this science he was afterwards able to refute most thoroughly both the pagan and heretical dogmas, and induce many to embrace the true faith. The fame of his learning made him greatly esteemed everywhere, and still more the holiness of his life which served as a model to all. St. Ambrose, who lived at that time, had heard so much of him, that he sought his friendship, and having said much to Pope Damasus in praise of Zenobius, the Holy Father desired his presence in Rome, that he might make use of him in important affairs. The Pope sent him as nuncio to the Emperor of Constantinople; where he encouraged the Catholics, who were much oppressed by the heretics, and defended the true faith with great energy against heresy.



After the death of Theodore, bishop of Florence, the inhabitants of the city were divided into two portions; Catholics and Arians. Hence one party desired a Catholic, the other an Arian, as bishop. Damasus sent Zenobius thither, that he might put an end to the contention and arrange all for the good of the Catholic Church. As soon as he had arrived, both parties united, by a special providence, in the declaration that they would have no one but Zenobius as successor to their late bishop. No sooner, however, was the humble Saint informed of this, than he left the city. Several persons, hastening after him, went to the Pope and announced to him the unanimous choice of the city. The Pope consenting, consecrated the holy man, who had already been some years a priest, as bishop, and giving him many especial privileges, sent him to Florence. The rejoicing of the people was great, but not less was the sorrow of Zenobius, who did not believe that his shoulders were strong enough to support the heavy burden of the Episcopate. Yet after having,

by many prayers and penances, asked the divine assistance, he went courageously to work. He preached almost daily with Apostolic zeal, opposed undauntedly the heretics, and punished bad Catholics without respect of persons. Many, as well Catholics as heretics, were not at all satisfied with his actions. They blamed and disapproved of what they called his untimely zeal in opposing the heretics, and his too great rigor in punishing vice; and he had consequently to endure many affronts, grievances and persecutions. But the holy man did not allow himself to be disturbed, and many events which happened manifested that God was well pleased with his work. He therefore bestowed on him the gift of working miracles, in order to make those ashamed who were against the Saint. It is known that he restored the sight of a beggar who had been blind many years, and had begged alms at the door of the church; also, that he raised to life several dead who were being carried to the grave; and that he healed many that were possessed. Among the last was a noble and rich pagan widow, who in anger wished that the devil might possess her bad and godless sons. God allowed the mother's wish to be fulfilled. The devil took possession of her two sons, who became so enraged against each other, that they, like mad dogs, attacked, bit, scratched and maltreated each other most horribly. As none of the means tried had any effect, the afflicted widow, with tearful eyes, begged help from the Saint. His prayers caused the Evil spirits to flee, and mother and sons were converted to the true faith. Many similar occurrences are recorded in the life of this Saint.

We will add a few words about his happy death. The holy bishop had most faithfully tended his flock until his old age; he had converted many pagans and heretics to the true faith; and had constantly exercised himself in fasting, praying, giving alms and other good works, when his last hour was revealed to him and a very painful malady sent. This he bore, as he had borne all former afflictions, with Christian fortitude and patience; he received holy unction with great devotion, exhorted all present to love and fear God, and ended his virtuous, meritorious life by a happy death, in the year 417. Many most astonishing miracles took place at his tomb. We will add one of them here. A boy was sick with a burning fever. He was incessantly tormented with thirst. His mother, who was devoted to him, was at his side day and night and refreshed him whenever he desired. Once, however, after she had in one single night appeased his thirst nearly 40 times, she was overcome by sleep, and when the sick boy asked again for drink, the mother, roused out of her sleep, exclaimed in great anger: "Well, drink, until

you have swallowed the devil himself!" This wish, although spoken unreflectingly and in anger, was in righteous judgment, immediately fulfilled, to give a wholesome warning to all parents. The boy became possessed by the Evil One and was cruelly tormented. After having vainly tried all possible means, they brought him to the tomb of Saint Zenobius, where, after a short prayer, the devil left him. This occurrence should be well remembered by those parents who curse their children in a similar manner. The anger in which they utter such speeches does not excuse them. God, who is able to send to their children what parents, to their own punishment, may wish, is ever living. But if this do not happen, it still remains a most hurtful and inexcusable vice, for parents to curse their children, as has been said already on another occasion.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "I have loved justice and hated iniquity." These were the last words of St. Gregory. Happy is he who can in truth speak them, even though he, like St. Gregory, die in exile and poverty and persecution. Can you say in truth that you hate wickedness or sin? He who hates a man does not associate much nor in a friendly manner with him. He does not seek him, does not invite him, does not beg him to remain long, gives him no shelter in his house. From this, one concludes that he hates him. Do you not act quite differently with sin? You seek it, commit it voluntarily and deliberately, you love it, you permit it a long residence in your soul; you nurse it and remain long in it. Is this a sign of hating sin? And how do you love justice, virtue, piety? He who loves a thing, endeavors to become possessed of it, even should it cost much labor and pains. But you take no pains to gain virtue. You are indifferent to piety. You have opportunities to practise virtue and live piously; but you neglect both. Perhaps you are even of those who deride others and

laugh at them because of their piety, and who rather associate with the wicked than with the devout. Is that a sign that you love justice, piety, virtue? Truly whoever judges by your conduct must suppose that you hate virtue and love vice. Is that the path that leads to heaven? Point me out the Saint who gained heaven in such a manner. If you wish to go thither, love virtue, and endeavor most earnestly to obtain it. Hate and shun sin, and manifest this hatred in deeds.

II. Both the holy Pope Gregory and St. Zenobius were zealous for the honor of God, the welfare of the Church, the conversion of heretics, the protection of the true faith, the uprooting of vice and abuses. This their zeal was approved by many miracles, though by many persons disapproved of and blamed. On this account both had greatly to suffer, but neither relaxed in fervor. It is nothing new that the godless deride, mock and persecute those who are virtuous and hate sin. "Come" say they, "let us lie in wait for the just man. . . . Let us examine him by outrages and tor-

tures Let us condemn him to a most shameful death." Why? "He is contrary to our doings . . . He is grievous unto us, even to behold: for his life is not like other men's, and his ways are very different." (Wisdom ii.) Thus the wicked spoke, centuries ago. But what says Holy Writ of them? "These things they thought and were deceived: for their own malice blinded them." Surely an awful and devilish wickedness! They love not virtue, they hate not vice, and cannot endure that others hate sin and love virtue. They are not pious themselves, and will not suffer others to be pious. They live in sin and vice, and will not allow others to shun doing so. Hence they deride and persecute them. Let not the godless make you go astray by their mocking, laughter and per-

secution. Persevere in your love of virtue, in your hatred of sin. They themselves will one day confess and repent of their fault, but will not be able to repair it; for, their repentance will come too late. Holy Writ says: "Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them. These seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear. Saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they, whom we had sometimes in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their lives madness, and their end without honor. Behold! now they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth; etc." (Wisdom, v.)

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. PHILIP NERI, FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY
AT ROME.

Philip Neri, the celebrated Founder of the far-famed Oratory at Rome, was born in Florence, of very pious parents, in the year 1515. He was so good in his childhood, that he was known under no other name than that of "the good little Philip." To his parents he was so obedient, that his father said he had only once in his life occasion to reprove him, and this only for a slight cause; but Philip, thinking he had grieved his father, was so distressed that he wept bitterly. To pray and to be present at a sermon were his only pleasures; the former he continued for hours, and the latter he never neglected. Until his eighteenth year he remained with his father at Florence, when he was sent to Naples, to his uncle, who, being a rich merchant, wished to make Philip his heir. But Philip had no inclination to become a merchant, and with his uncle's consent, he proceeded to Rome to study theology. At this period, Philip began the austere life

which he continued unto his end. He nursed the sick in the hospitals, instructed the poor and the ignorant in religion, visited frequently during the day the seven Churches, and at night the tombs of the holy martyrs, through whose intercession he asked nothing more warmly than a true fervent love of God.

The fervor of his devotion at the time of his prayers was so great, that he tore his garments from his breast, the better to breathe, or laid himself with open breast upon the ground to cool the inward fire of his love to God. "Oh! my God!" exclaimed he at such times, "O my God, my love! Thou art mine and I am wholly thine. O most adorable God! Thou who hast commanded that I should love Thee; why hast thou given me only one and so narrow a heart?" He was so filled with spiritual comfort, that he often exclaimed: "Leave me, O my Lord, leave me; for human weakness cannot bear such heavenly joys!" On Pentecost, he prayed most devoutly that the Holy Ghost would kindle in his heart the fire of Divine love. During his prayers, his heart was so filled with the ardor of his love, that through its emotion and expansion, two ribs were broken and raised above the others, as was seen with great astonishment after his death. He very seldom said Holy Mass without shedding many tears. He frequently stood for hours before the Altar in raptures, transported out of himself. This happened also to him at other times, and he was seen, while at prayers, raised from the ground and surrounded by a brilliant light. To pass whole nights in prayer was his supreme delight.

With his devotions, however, he did not forget the salvation of souls, for which, out of love to God, he most zealously labored. An almost incredibly large number of hardened sinners he brought to repentance; by his sermons he converted Jews and Heretics, and opened the eyes of frivolous people to the vanities of the world; and this often with very few words. Thus a youth who, out of desire to gain honor and riches, studied jurisprudence and Canon Law, he alienated from the love of all earthly things, by addressing to him the following words: "Francis, you will study law; you will become a great Doctor, and after that an eminent Councillor or Prelate of the Church: you will gain honor and riches; but what then? What will happen then?" These oft repeated words; "but what then? what will happen then?" and the thought they awakened, that death would surely follow, changed the youth into quite a different being, and induced him to enter the clerical state.

To oppose heresy more effectually, which at that time was gaining ground, St. Philip persuaded the celebrated Cæsar Baronius to write the history of the Church.

For the better instruction of the Catholics, as well as to strengthen them in the true faith and excite them to the practice of all Christian virtues, he founded a Clerical Congregation, the members of which were obliged, by daily preaching and devout conferences, by unweariedly hearing confessions and other spiritual labors, to advance the salvation of their fellow-men. Towards the Divine Mother he entertained the most tender devotion, and endeavored also to gain her the hearts of others, with the words: "My dear Children, honor the mother of Our Lord, love the Blessed Virgin." The prayer which he most frequently repeated was: "O Mary, Mother of Our Lord! pray to Christ for me! O Virgin! O Mother!" The lives of the Saints were his great delight and his study was to imitate them.

In his love to the poor he showed a more than fatherly heart. No beggar was allowed to leave him without having received alms. He even carried alms to those houses where it was manifested to him by divine revelation that need and poverty dwelt. Once, when going on one of these charitable missions during the night, he fell into so deep a pit, that according to human calculation, he should have met his death; but his guardian Angel protected him and helped him out of the pit. At another time, a beggar covered with miserable rags met him, asking alms. Philip gave him all he had, and at the same moment, the beggar vanished, saying: "I desired only to see what you would do."

He preserved his purity unspotted until his death. The danger of losing it he warded off with Christian fortitude. His functions as priest were once required by a woman who pretended to be sick and desirous of confessing. No sooner, however, had he appeared, than she tried to seduce him to vice; but the saint fled from her, and hastened down the staircase and out of the house. At another time some wicked people concealed two shameless women in the room where Philip had to pass the night. When he entered the room to say his prayers, the two women made their appearance, and so frightened the chaste servant of God, that he would have run away, had not those who had concealed the women in his room locked the door on the outside. Throwing himself upon his knees, he called upon God so fervently to come to his aid, that neither of the women had the courage to speak a word, except to beg his pardon, promising that they would change their lives.

He had the gift of distinguishing the pure from the impure, by the sense of smell. When he spoke to any one who was impure, he experienced such a stench that he had to hold his handkerchief before his nose. He therefore said to more than

one dissipated youth whom he met: "You savor ill, my son, you savor ill." He, on the contrary perceived the most agreeable odor from those whose life was pure.

Notwithstanding his being favored with these and many other gifts, he yet lived in continual humiliation before God and men. He not only evaded idle praise, but rather sought to make himself despicable to others. One day, on meeting St. Felix, a Capuchin Friar, who was carrying a bottle of wine, he asked for a drink: and having taken it openly on the street, in presence of a great many persons, he placed his own hat upon St. Felix's head and went home bare-headed; which of course gave to many an occasion to laugh at him and deride him. He often cried to God: "Lord, leave me not; as otherwise I shall this day, like Judas, betray you." Such was his mistrust in his own moral strength. During a dangerous sickness, he was advised to call on God in the words of St. Martin: "Lord, if I am needful to Thy people, I will not refuse to labor for Thee, &c." But he answered: "I will not do it; for I am not one who can think himself necessary to a single human being. I should deserve eternal punishment if I could imagine any thing like it." His patience, when assailed by the most unjust persecutions and slanders, was invincible. When a great wrong had been done to him, he went into the Church of St. Peter, and there offered a long prayer for his enemies and persecutors. During the most painful maladies, he praised and thanked God, saying frequently: "Lord, increase the suffering, but with it the patience." In the last year but one of his life a mortal sickness befell him, but when every one thought that he could not live a moment longer, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him (as had often happened), and immediately restored him to health.

In the year 1595, however, the hour of his death drew near. A violent fever, accompanied by vomiting of blood, carried the Saint, in the course of a few days, to the grave. On the Festival of Corpus Christi he said Mass, heard confessions, offered his daily prayers, gave wholesome instructions to those under him, caused to be read to him a few pages concerning the happy death of St. Bernardin of Sienna, and then peacefully expired. The fervent prayers in which before his end, his soul poured out its love to the Almighty, brought tears to the eyes of all present. Both before and after his death, God wrought many miracles by his intercession. His holy body was found, many years after his demise, in a state of perfect preservation.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Philip was graced by God with the gift of distinguishing the pure from the impure by the sense of smell. He perceived that the impure exhaled a dreadful stench, but the pure a heavenly fragrance. The same we read in the life of St. Catherine of Sienna. (April 30th.) Impurity is an ill-savoring vice; therefore, those addicted to it are compared in Holy writ to senseless beasts, which wallow in their own filth, as horses, mules, swine and goats. But the offensive odor of all these animals is not so disagreeable and unbearable to us, as the ill-savor of impure men is horrible to God and the holy angels. While, on the contrary, no fragrance of roses, lilies, violets or other flowers, is so agreeable to men, as the perfume that emanates from the virtue of chastity. Which odor to you exhale? Can St. Philip say of you: "You savor ill; my son, you savor ill?" You savor ill on account of the impure thoughts you entertain. You savor ill on account of your lascivious speeches. You savor ill on account of your abominable deeds. You are then like an unclean goat. But the goats belong to the left hand of the divine Judge, and to the everlasting fire. A goat retains his stench as long as life is in him. He lives and dies with it. Just so, he who gives himself to the vice of impurity, and remains long in it, will not leave it even in his old age: he dies and goes with it to eternal destruction. It is a miracle of Divine Grace if he is able to change his conduct. This truth St. Paul desired to make known, when relating several miraculous events, he adds the following words: "Rahab, the harlot, perished not with the unbe-

lievers." (Heb., Chapt. ii.) "It is a great miracle," writes Theodore, "if a man, who has long lived an impure life, goes not to damnation." In the ordinary course of life, the words of the Prophet Joel are verified: "The beasts have rotted in their dung." (Joel, Chapt. i.) This means, according to the explanation of St. Gregory: "The impure end their days in the stench of impurity." Consider well this truth and conceive the greatest horror for so dangerous a vice.

II. St. Philip mistrusted his own moral strength to such an extent, that he feared to fall into great sin, and therefore constantly called on God for His aid. You deceive yourself if you believe that you can guard yourself in future from committing sin, because you perhaps, up to the present moment, have not fallen so deeply as many others. That you have not yet fallen, you do not owe to your own strength, but to the grace of the Most High. St. Augustine counts it among the especial favors of God: when one does not fall into many sins. "As I have fallen into many sins," says he, "I should have fallen into still more, if Thou, O Lord, hadst not sustained and protected me." This protection, according to St. Bernard, is given in three different ways, which he explains in the following words: "I should have fallen into many sins if I had had the occasion; but the grace of God kept this occasion away from me. Other sins I should have committed if I had been hard beset by temptation; but God bestowed the grace upon me to conquer it. And the mercy of God has prevented me from others, by giving me, so to speak, an inborn

hatred of them, so that I feel no inclination towards them." Learn from this, that you owe it only to God, if you have been preserved from mortal sin. If you wish to abstain from it in future, pray daily to God that he will give you his protection, and shelter you with his grace. For the words of St. Augustine are true: "There is no sin that has been committed by one man, that cannot be committed by another, if he be not guarded by Him who created all human beings."

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. MAGDALEN OF PAZZI.

St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, a shining example of virtue and holiness, was born at Florence, in 1566, of illustrious parents. She received the name of Catherine in baptism, but on entering the Convent, she changed it to Mary Magdalen. The lessons of her office in the Roman Breviary testify that her life was perfect from her earliest youth. Her only enjoyment, when yet a small child, was, to be taken to church, or to listen to the histories of the lives of the saints. She prayed for hours before she was able to read. Being asked what she was doing, she replied: "I pray God for grace to learn what I should do to please Him." When she was sent to school, they gave her, as is the custom of the country, a little basket of refreshments. She, however, gave it to some prisoners whom she passed on her way, and thus fasted until noon. At another time she abstained from food or drink until she had been to church. When scarcely seven years of age, she began to mortify herself in divers ways. She denied herself her favorite fruit; took only two meals, one at noon and one at evening; refused to be present at the theatre; read with great avidity spiritual books, especially those which treated of the life and sufferings of our Saviour, and which implanted in her heart that ardent love of Christ of which her life gives so bright a record. In her eighth and ninth years, she had so intense a longing to receive holy Communion, that she could not, without tears, look at those who had the grace to partake of this food of angels. She was therefore permitted to receive her first communion, at the age of ten years. How this holy act filled her heart with joy and happiness is more easily conceived than described. She herself declared it was the happiest day of her life. Soon after, she consecrated herself entirely to God by taking the vow of perpetual chastity. Having reached her twelfth year, she had increased her mortifications to such an extent, that she wore

a penitential robe of hair-cloth, slept upon the floor and wore, during the night, a crown of thorns upon her head. She mortified her tender body in these and many other ways, in order to become more like her beloved Jesus. When 15 years old, several rich and noble young men asked her hand in marriage; but she assured her parents that she had already chosen a much richer and more noble bridegroom, to whom she would always remain faithful, namely, Jesus.

In her 17th year, after having overcome many obstacles, she entered the convent of the Carmelites at Florence, on the same day on which St. Teresa left this world and went to Heaven. As she had taken the name of the woman so devoted to our Lord, she endeavored also to imitate her in her love of Christ and in all her other virtues. On the feast of the Holy Trinity she took her vows with such piety and fervor, that after the ceremony she remained for two hours in raptures. The same happened for 40 days in succession, after she had received holy Communion. At other times, also, she fell into raptures, and had most extraordinary visions as well as revelations, in which she received many wise instructions from the Almighty, and the gift of prophecy. The fire of heavenly love in her was sometimes so ardent, that she had frequently to cool her hands and her breast with cold water. She would often seize the crucifix and exclaim: "O Love! O love! I shall never cease to love Thee!" On the Festival of the Invention, or finding of the holy Cross, she ran through all the corridors of the convent crying: "O love! how little Thou art known! how little Thou art appreciated! Ah! come, come, all ye souls, and love your God!" She often wished to possess so loud a voice that it might be heard through the whole world, when she would cry to all mankind: "Love God! love God!" Nothing caused her more pain than to hear that the Almighty had been offended by others. She daily offered certain prayers and penances to God for the conversion of pagans and sinners, and exhorted her sisters in the convent to do the same. For the salvation of souls she offered herself to the Almighty to be afflicted with all possible diseases and pains; she was even willing to bear the torment of hell, provided that she were not forced to blaspheme God there. One day she said: "Were the Almighty to ask me what reward I desire for the little good I have done with His grace, my answer would be: nothing but the salvation of souls." The time of Carnival was for her a time of prayers and severe penances, which she performed in order to appease the wrath of Almighty God, whom she knew so many offended at that time. She tortured her body by wearing hair-shirts, by flagellation, watching, enduring cold and heat, and by

most austere fasting. During 22 years all the nourishment she took was bread and water, except on Sundays, when she partook of lenten diet.

Meanwhile it pleased the Most High to prove his faithful handmaiden by great affliction. Five long years she was tormented day and night with impure and blasphemous thoughts; but she always struggled with them valiantly, not allowing herself to become downcast or despondent. She often took the image of Christ or of the Blessed Virgin, and embracing it, prayed to God for aid. For the last three years of her life she had to endure divers painful maladies, and suffered so greatly from decay of the gums, that she lost one tooth after another. To this was added a burning fever and violent headache. To increase her suffering, God deprived her of all the spiritual comfort she had heretofore enjoyed. She had constantly to keep her bed, except at the time of Mass and Communion, and it was wonderful to behold how, during the first of these three years, she was strengthened by the Almighty to be present at the divine sacrifice and to receive the Blessed Eucharist, while directly afterwards she had to return to her room, where she remained so totally exhausted that it was to be supposed she was dying. They tried to dissuade her from so frequently receiving holy communion; but she said that without it she would not be able to endure her suffering, as it endued her with strength. Therefore it was daily given to her when she was no longer able to leave her room. The patience with which she bore her sufferings is not to be described. Her continual saying was: "To suffer, not to die." She desired to suffer as long as possible out of love to Christ. One day when her confessor, in order to comfort her, said that her sufferings would come to an end at last, she replied: "No, my father, I desire no such comfort, but hope that I may be permitted to suffer unto my life's end." At another time, she said: "I hope to die like my Saviour, on the cross," by which she meant, in agonies and pain.

When her sufferings had continued for three years, the physicians pronounced her end near. Magdalen requested Extreme Unction after holy Communion; and having begged her sisters to forgive her all her faults, she exhorted them specially to love God and hate themselves. After this, she continued during twelve days in the most edifying exercises, and then ended her holy and wonderful life, not so much consumed by the violence of her bodily suffering as by her fervent love to God, in the year 1607, on a Friday, and almost at the same hour at which our Saviour died for us on the Cross. A few days before her death she said: "I die without even being able to

comprehend how it is possible for any one to commit a mortal sin." Soon after her death, God made her entering into the abode of the Blessed known to the world, not only by many miracles, but also by the change that took place in her holy body. From being emaciated and pale by severe penances and a painful sickness, it suddenly became resplendent with beauty and moved all who beheld it to glorify the Almighty. The most delicious fragrance emanated from it. In 1663 when, by order of the Government, the body of the Saint was examined, it was found entirely uncorrupted and exhaling the same fragrance. It is rightly believed that God thus rewarded the virginal purity which the Saint had preserved unspotted by means of penances and prayers, fervent partaking of the holy Sacrament and filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin. She had always evinced the greatest horror of the vice of impurity, and could not remain in the presence of persons addicted to it, without a feeling of abhorrence. This was manifested even after her death. A youth of loose morals approached the bier, on which the body of the Saint was lying, to gaze at her remains. When he, however, imprudently cast his eyes upon her face, the corpse averted it from him, which made so deep an impression on him, that he confessed his fault and promised with tears to reform his life.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

- I. "To love God and hate ourselves" was the last instruction which St. Magdalen gave to her sisters in Christ, and by which she had regulated her own life. The hatred which she bore to herself she clearly manifested by her severe fasting, by her many austere penances, by her love to God, by her horror of sin, by her victories over temptation, by her heroic patience in suffering, by her insatiable desire to suffer out of love to God, and also by her mortifications, as she never partook of either food or drink except at stated times, never participated in the frivolous enjoyments of the Carnival, nor went to theatres, and deprived herself of fruit, of which she was very fond. In which point will you follow her example, and show not only your hatred to self but your love to God? You can best imitate her by depriving yourself, on certain days, of all food, except at your meals, and by abstaining from profane amusements. Do this out of love to God, and you will manifest your love to him and your hatred to yourself. If you will not consent to this, you plainly show that you love yourself too well, as you allow your body all it craves. And though this may not be a sign that you hate God, since the pleasures of which you refuse to deprive yourself may be harmless; yet it is a sign that you do not love God as you ought to love Him.
- II. For five years St. Magdalen was tormented almost day and night with the most horrible temptations to impurity, blasphemy and despair;

but she always combatted them, without allowing herself to be cast down or despondent. She called God to her aid and, sustained by his grace, she always conquered. Satan endeavors generally to torment with manifold temptations, those who are assiduous in serving the Lord. For, as St. Gregory says: "Those of whom he is sure, he does not torment much." A servant of God ought therefore not to be grieved, but pray and combat. The Almighty who permits such temptations for our own good, will surely not forsake us, and, strengthened by him, we shall conquer hell. Therefore no one ought to despond, as by so doing he prepares an enjoyment for the enemy of man and causes him to increase the temptations. "When our enemies, writes St. Climacus, see that we fear and tremble they attack us so much the more violently." Hence, let us courageously arm ourselves and fight against them. In truth we have no reason to fear or become downcast,

whether we regard God, ourselves, or Satan. Regarding God, faith teaches us that he does not permit us to be tempted beyond our strength, as St. Paul assures us. (I Cor. x.) He also offers us His grace that we may overcome our temptations. He strengthens us in our weakness, as we are also taught by Holy Writ. If we regard ourselves, faith teaches us that we have our free will, by the power of which, we can either resist temptations with the grace of God, or consent to them. "Man has his free will, says St. Cyril of Jerusalem; Satan may tempt him, but cannot force him against his will." If we regard Satan, we know, as has just been said, that he cannot force us to consent. "Behold, says St. Bernard, the weakness of our enemy. He is able to conquer him only who is willing to be overcome. Our enemy can tempt, but it is in our power to consent or not." What reason have we therefore to fear? If we combat courageously, the victory will be ours.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. GERMANUS, BISHOP OF PARIS.

St. Germanus, a most perfect model of all bishops, was born at the end of the fifth century, at Autun, in France. Before he had seen the light of the world, divine Providence manifested that he was under especial protection. His unnatural mother endeavored to kill him with drugs, while she yet carried him in her bosom; but God, watching over him, did not suffer him to be harmed. Just as miraculously was he protected during his childhood. His grandmother, or as others write, his mother, determined to take his life. She filled two cups with wine, in one of which she mixed poison, telling the servant to give it to Germanus; the other was to be given to a boy of the same age, as they came home together from school. Providence, however,

so ordained that Germanus received the unmixed wine, and the other child the poisoned cup, on drinking which the latter immediately expired. After these signs of special divine protection Germanus went to his uncle Scapilion, whose fatherly care made amends for the neglect which he had experienced while at home. Germanus was very diligent in his studies, but still more assiduous in attaining virtue and piety. He remained fifteen years with his uncle, and led so edifying a life, that the bishop ordained him priest, and Nectarius, his successor, made him Abbot of St. Symphorian's, a monastery in the suburbs of Autun.

The new abbot governed those under him more by example than by precept. Towards the needy he was extremely kind. One day, when some beggars asked alms, and all that he had was the bread which was to feed the religious, he ordered it to be given to the beggars. Some murmured at this, and were dissatisfied with the holy abbot, who retired to his room to pray. Behold, in the same hour, a kind lady sent two baskets filled with bread, and on the following day, two wagons laden with provisions came to the gate of the monastery. This instilled a more perfect trust in God, into those who had been dissatisfied with Germanus. The Almighty, who had so wonderfully rewarded the liberality of the Saint, desired also to prove his patience. The bishop of Autun, giving ear to evil tongues, became so incensed against the Saint, that he imprisoned him; but the door of the prison opened of itself and thus offered him his freedom. The Saint, however, left not his place of confinement, until the bishop, acknowledging his innocence, set him at liberty. After this trial, God graced Germanus with the power of working miracles, and one day, when a large hay-stable had taken fire, endangering the monastery, he extinguished it immediately with a few drops of holy water.

The report of this and other miracles made the Saint so famous, that on the death of Eusebius, Bishop of Paris, he was appointed by King Childebert to succeed him, and was accordingly consecrated. This new dignity had been revealed to him before he was elected, but it caused no change in his way of living. As bishop, he lived as humbly and was as kind to the poor as he had been before. Indeed his charity increased; because being at the same time the king's almoner, he had more means of doing good. In like manner, the Saint increased his penances and mortifications of his body. Among these was especially admired the self-abnegation with which he bore all the inconveniences of the seasons, both heat and cold, without in the least trying to protect himself against them. In the coldest weather he allowed himself no fire in his room. In the

discharge of his functions he was unwearied; yet he found means to spend a part of the day and the greater part of the night in prayer.

He restored King Childebert to health by laying his hands upon him. The king in grateful recognition of this favor, erected a magnificent church and cloister. Paris has also to thank the holy bishop for the grand seminary in which the clergy are instructed in theology and sacerdotal virtue.

After the death of Clotaire, who had succeeded Childebert, Cheribert ascended the throne, and, disowning his wife, married her sister, to the scandal of the whole nation. The bishop endeavored by kind remonstrances and admonitions to bring the king to the knowledge and reparation of his crime, but without success. He then menaced him with excommunication, and as this also was without effect, he undauntedly put his threat into execution and excommunicated the king as well as his concubine. They, however, heeded not this punishment, but continued their criminal conduct, until God called them both before His judgment-seat by a sudden death, showing that He does not always leave those who disdain excommunication without punishment even upon earth. Meanwhile, the saint became daily more renowned by the miracles he performed in favor of the sick and of those in prison. A certain Count Nicasius kept some prisoners in a dungeon: St. Germanus, being invited to dinner by the Count, commenced at table to speak of mercy towards our neighbor, and afterwards he humbly requested the release of the prisoners. As the Count was not to be moved, the Saint went to the dungeon and kneeling before the door, begged of God to grant what the Count had refused. The doors of the prison opened during his prayers, chains and fetters dropped from the hands and feet of the prisoners, and following the counsel of the holy bishop, they went joyfully to their homes. When Nicasius complained of it, he was seized with violent pains in his head, so that nothing but the prayers of St. Germanus could give him relief.

The life of the Saint is full of similar events, but we will only add one more. A judge had imprisoned several innocent men who prayed to God to release them in consideration of the merits of Germanus who was still alive. In the night the Saint appeared to them, showed them the way and gave them means to escape. The judge, enraged at the guards and the jailer, had them imprisoned in the same dungeon, saying that they had neglected their duty. No sooner had Germanus been informed of this, than he invited himself to dinner at the judge's. During the repast, upon the prayer of the holy man the door of the prison was opened by an invisible hand. The jailer and all the

guards stepped out and proceeded to the room where the judge was at table, who was the more astonished to behold them, as he had himself taken the key of the prison in order to prevent all fraud.

After having performed this and many other miracles, and having labored unweariedly for the honor of God, the hour of his death was revealed to him by the Almighty. He was commanded to write at the head of his bed: "On May 28th." This was the day that God had announced to him. How carefully he prepared himself for his last hour may easily be imagined from his holy life, the whole of which was in truth a preparation for a happy death. When the appointed hour came, the revelation of God was fulfilled. St. Germanus expired in the 80th year of his life, the greater part of which had been spent in the service of God in laboring for the salvation of souls. His holy body lies in the celebrated Abbey which bears his name.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. What was particularly admired in St. Germanus was the self-control with which he bore the inconveniences of the seasons, suffering heat and cold without in the least trying to protect himself against them. And truly this is worthy of being admired. For who does not seek to protect himself against the scorching heat of the summer, or the biting cold of winter: who does not endeavor to shelter himself against storms or other inclemencies of the weather? Neither does God forbid this, provided we use lawful means. Those, however, are greatly to be blamed who in the warm season seek to cool themselves by indecorously exposing their persons. But it is still worse to bathe in public without being modestly covered. We cannot excuse ourselves by saying that the heat is unendurable. Hundreds of both sexes, of whom many have been brought up much more tenderly than you, endure greater heat in convents, where they are dressed in heavy rough garments. If they can endure the

heat, why should it be impossible for others to do so? How will you stand the heat of hell, or even of purgatory, if you think what the seasons bring unendurable? Take care that you do not belong to the number of those effeminate persons. Bear with patience the discomfort of the warm weather, and offer it to God as an expiation of your wrong doings. If it should cause you some bodily pain, think, it is neither hell nor purgatory. The body has well deserve to be punished, because you have indulged it too much.

II. St. Germanus used holy water to extinguish a conflagration. Many similar effects of holy water are related in the lives of the Saints; and it is certain that holy water was used even in the first Christian centuries. The testimony of the most ancient Fathers of the Church indisputably proves this fact. True Christians highly esteem this water, blessed after the instructions of the Church, and use it with great faith in the merits of Christ and in the

prayers of the holy Church which are pronounced over it. The heretics alone despise it openly, although many of them use it secretly, in sickness. In this they are imitated by some who wish to be called Catholics, but who are not at all real Catholics, as they look upon this ancient custom of the Church as an empty and useless ceremony. Therefore they are ashamed to have holy water openly in their room; or to bless themselves with it in the morning and at night, or on leaving the Church, as if this custom were good only for uneducated people. They

think themselves wiser than the whole Church of Christ. Do not imitate their example but use holy water mornings and nights, when you leave your room and again when you return to it. Observe the same on going in and out of Church. The sick and dying are sprinkled with holy water, as experience teaches that evil spirits are frequently driven away by it. "The faithful and their dwellings are sprinkled with holy water, to banish and keep away evil spirits and their persecution," writes Hugh of St. Victor.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF MAY.

ST. MAXIMINUS, BISHOP OF TRIERS, AND ST. UBALDUS, BISHOP OF EUGUBIO.

St. Maximinus was a native of France, the son of rich and noble parents. St. Agritius, Archbishop of Triers instructed him in theology. After being ordained priest he used all the powers of his mind to teach the Catholics and refute heresy, which at that period was making great inroads on the true Church. At Triers lived a holy priest named Quiriacus, to whom, one night an angel appeared, who commanded him to go, on the following day, to Maximinus and inform him that God had destined him to succeed Agritius in the government of the Church at Triers. The priest obeyed the command but Maximinus refused to believe it, as he deemed himself unworthy of so high a dignity. Soon after an angel appeared to Agritius, commanding him to declare Maximinus his successor. Agritius obeyed, and as soon as he had done so, he peacefully expired; and Maximinus was elected by the clergy and people to occupy the vacant See.

After this event he attended with the greatest care to the welfare of the souls committed to his charge, and so energetically opposed the Arians, who had seduced many Catholics, that St. Jerome, the great Father of the Church, hesitated not to count him one of the most excellent bishops. St. Athanasius who, at the instigation of the heretics, had been banished from his bishopric, was received by Maximinus with joy and great honor, and re-

mained, most carefully attended by him, more than two years at Triers. He met the wicked design of the Arians valiantly and was unwearied in his vigilance to keep those rapacious wolves from his flock; nay, he even took care of those who did not belong to his fold nor to his see. Hence, being informed that Euphrates, bishop of Cologne, had been seduced by the Arians, by his associating too intimately with them, and that he preached their doctrines, Maximinus caused a council to be held at Cologne in which Euphrates was convicted of heresy and dispossessed of his See. How many thousand souls St. Maximinus thus kept in the Catholic faith and saved from heresy and consequent damnation, is known only to the Almighty. Although on account of this he suffered greatly from the Arians, and was driven from his see by them, he consoled himself with the thought, that he was deemed worthy to suffer for the true faith. Providence directed all things in such a manner that he was eventually restored to his bishopric.

Some time after this, he made a journey to Rome, in order to visit the tombs of the Apostles and other holy martyrs. While on his way, he met the holy bishop Martin, in whose company he proceeded in the most pious manner. The principal occupation of the two holy men during this time, was prayer, devout discourses, and singing Psalms. Wherever they took lodgings, others were edified by their rigorous fasting, their moderation in sleeping, their modest behaviour, and their pious discourses. They kept an ass which carried some necessary articles for them, and one day a bear broke suddenly forth from a neighboring wood, attacked the beast, threw it upon the ground and tore it into pieces. St. Maximinus, however, turning to the bear, commanded it, in the name of the Lord, to take the place of the ass and carry the load it had borne. The bear obeyed and carried what was laid upon him as far as the Saint desired: which not only awakened great astonishment in all who saw it, but also great esteem for the two Saints. After they had satisfied their devotion in Rome, they returned to their respective Sees. St. Martin left with St. Maximinus his faithful disciple Lubentius, that he might be still better instructed in theology, which was carefully attended to by St. Maximinus.

When at length, Maximinus felt that his last hour was approaching, he desired once more to visit his home, on account of some important affairs concerning the honor of God and the salvation of souls. He arrived safely, but soon after, became sick and ended his holy life in his own home.

St. Maximinus was renowned through the whole Christian

world on account of his apostolic zeal in defending the true faith against all its enemies. He was therefore beloved and honored by the Catholics as much as he was hated and feared by the heretics. St. Paulinus, who succeeded him in his See, had his holy relics brought to Triers where a blind man, who touched the bier, was immediately restored to sight: and also, two lepers were cleansed of their disease. Charles Martel, who by the intercession of St. Maximinus, was cured of a dangerous fever, bestowed rich benefices on the celebrated monastery which bears the name of the Saint; in order that God might there be glorified by many religious. The Saint is specially honored by God in delivering by his intercession, all those who are possessed by the Evil One.



To the brief sketch of St. Maximinus we shall add a few lines on the life of the holy bishop Ubaldus although his festival will be kept on another day. This bishop was born at Eugubio, in Umbria, of noble parents, who early led him upon the path of virtue and knowledge. Having arrived at manhood, his parents proposed to him a suitable marriage, which he, however, declined: and, as he desired to preserve his purity unspotted, he determined to enter the religious life and became Canon in the Church of St. Secundus. His conduct was so edifying that the Clergy of Perugia elected him as successor to their late bishop. As soon as the humble Ubaldus had been informed of it, he secretly escaped and concealed himself until another had received the mitre. Not so successful was he in refusing the dignity of bishop of his native place. The bishop of the city died and the electors could not agree on a new choice. They requested therefore, the Pope to give them a worthy chief for their Church. The Pope appointed Ubaldus, who left nothing untried to decline the honor; but tears and prayers were unavailing, and he was obliged to obey.

Being consecrated bishop, all his care was bestowed in performing the duties of his office to the salvation of his flock. As far as his own person was concerned, he redoubled his zeal in the practice of virtue and the works of charity. He used to say that a bishop had to strive more after perfection than an ordinary clergyman: that he must be distinguished from others by virtue, not by empty show, costly ornaments, or many servants: his income should be for the poor, not for adorning his residence, or procuring vanities. By these rules he regulated his life. To the poor he was ever liberal. In eating and drinking, in dress,

and in his dwelling, he evinced admirable moderation. He permitted his body no enjoyment, but mortified it by many penances. In regard to those in his charge, he was unwearied in leading them to the path of salvation. He endeavored to win all hearts by his kindness, gentleness and patience, in order that his admonitions might have greater effect. The following is a beautiful example of his gentle patience. A certain man had built a wall to the injury of another. The bishop remonstrated with him very kindly, but the man became so enraged, that he seized the holy bishop and threw him into a pit. The Saint, without uttering a word, got up and went away. The authorities would have punished the offender, but the bishop concealed him in his house, until he had obtained pardon for him. His gentleness often enabled him to appease the wrath of those who were determined on revenge. One day, there was an insurrection in the community; swords were drawn, and a fight seemed inevitable. The bishop seeing it, ran into the midst of the infuriated men, and looking at them with mild reproach, he exhorted them kindly to lay down their weapons. By this means the strife and tumult were subdued in a very short time. The Emperor Barbarossa approached the city, intending to sack and plunder it, as he had done to many others. Ubaldu, went to meet him, and succeeded so well in quieting him, that the Emperor prepossessed in his favor, asked his blessing upon bended knees and spared the city.

Many other memorable events I omit, and will only add a few words of his holy death. Although the Saint had labored for the honor of God and the salvation of souls for many years, the Almighty sent him at the end a very painful malady, which lasted the entire time of Lent. During this sickness, he continually praised God and cheered himself by singing songs of praise. When Easter drew near, the authorities of the city requested the bishop to say Mass on the day of the festival, to the comfort of the people. Humanly speaking, this was impossible; but sustained by a higher power, he left his bed after having performed his prayers, went into the Church, said Mass and addressed the people. Scarcely had he returned to his house, when he was seized with a burning fever, which gave the Saint occasion to increase his merits by the patience with which he bore it. His sickness lasted until Pentecost-Monday, when he ended his life, in the year 1069. That on the same day his life was renewed in heaven, was proved by several apparitions and miracles.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Maximnus occupied himself during his journey in prayer, devout discourse and in singing psalms. Wherever he took lodgings, he and his companion edified every one by their rigorous fasting, moderation in sleep, and modesty of manners. How much pleased must God have been with their manner of travelling, as well as with, the travellers themselves! But on the contrary, how displeased must He be with those who travel in quite a different way, whether it be to go on a long pilgrimage, or for business or pleasure. Some of these have an idea that they may allow themselves much greater liberties abroad than at home. Of praying they think very little or not at all: devout discourse is never heard to pass their lips: all Christian moderation is set aside. They are in manners and behavior unrestrained and licentious. They utter scandalous speeches, and are immoderate in eating and drinking; not to speak of many other things. How often is abstinence from meat, which the Catholic Church ordains on certain days, purposely disregarded, even in the presence of heretics, especially when one lodges with such as are not Catholics, or sits at a table where meat is served to others? Some do not think it wrong, even if they could have other food: or they excuse themselves by saying that they were travelling. How imprudently and sinfully such people act! Have they ceased to be Christians because they are travelling? Have they a dispensation while travelling from keeping the laws of God and of the Church? Have they no God above them to see and hear them? Will not this God ask an account of their

actions while they were on a journey? Is there no hell beneath them into which they may be precipitated by a sudden death? God grant that all, whom it concerns, may consider all this well and travel in future more as becomes Christians.

II. St. Ubalduſ took the utmost care to promote the salvation of his flock. You are not a bishop, but still the salvation of some souls may depend on you. These are the souls of your children, of the inmates of your house, of those under your authority. With regard to children, parents are instructed in Holy writ of the great duties they owe to them, of the care they ought to take of their salvation, that none of their number may be lost. The principal end of the Christian family is to educate children in such a manner, that they shall duly serve God upon this earth and gain life everlasting in heaven. This aim can be obtained only by bestowing the utmost care upon their salvation. Parents may well take this into consideration, if they do not wish to go to perdition with their children. In regard to other inmates of the house and domestics, the memorable words of St. Paul to heads of families should suffice, and should be taken to heart by all parents: "But if any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." (Tim: 5). Therefore St. Thomas of Villanova writes! "Do not say:" I give them meat and drink and pay them wages. As far as the soul is concerned, they may take care of themselves; for I am not a bishop, nor priest? Do not say this, for you will have to render a strict account, on the day

of Judgment, to Him who is the Lord of yourself and of all those under you." Besides this every body has one soul which is entrusted to him, namely, his own; and we ought to do all in our power not to lose it. "It is the greatest folly, writes St. Chrysostom, that whilst the devil endeavours to lead our soul into perdition, we are not, at least, as vigilant and careful to lead it on the path to salvation.

THIRTIETH DAY OF MAY.

ST. FERDINAND, KING OF CASTILE AND LEON.

St. Ferdinand III, king of Castile and Leon, was the son of Alphonsus, king of Leon, and of Berengaria, a royal princess. When eleven years old, he became so dangerously ill, that he could neither sleep nor partake of any food. His pious mother sought help in the Church of the Convent of Onia, where a miraculous picture of the Blessed Virgin was preserved with great honor and veneration. To this she went with the prince, and having placed the sick child upon the Altar, at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, prayed that, by her intercession, he might be restored to health. Her prayer was granted, for in the same hour, the prince's eyes closed in sleep, and on waking he asked for food, and regained his health. He himself acknowledged that, under God, he owed his life to the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin; hence he honored her most fervently during his whole life, and fled for refuge to her in all his troubles. Some years later, his mother became Regent of Castile; but after wisely governing the state for some time, she, with the consent of the nobles resigned, in favor of her son Ferdinand, whom, meanwhile, she had brought up piously, and who, by his education, was fitted for the throne. When in his 20th year, Ferdinand, by his mother's advice, married Beatrice, an imperial princess, who was his equal in piety and goodness. During his reign, Ferdinand displayed all those virtues that make a King praiseworthy, but above all a great zeal in protecting not only the honor of God and the true faith, but also in disseminating the same as far as it was in his power. Therefore, he was unwilling to keep the truce with the Moors, which had been agreed upon by his predecessors; but began in the year 1224, under the protection of God, to make yearly campaigns against these enemies of Christianity. He always returned victorious. Each year he conquered some city or district, and at last took whole kingdoms from the barbarians. He was the,

scourge of the infidel, but the protector of the Catholics. The cause of his success was, that in all his undertakings, he was animated only by the desire to promote the honor of God and the extension of the true faith; and because he always prayed most earnestly for the assistance of the Most High, and to obtain more certainly, he fervently asked the intercession of the Queen of Heaven; and finally, because he never ascribed a victory, or the happy termination of an affair, to his own powers, but to God, to the Holy Mother, and the protection of the Holy Apostle James. Before going into the field, and indeed before all important affairs, he offered a long and humble prayer, mortified his body by fasting and other penances, and performed other devotional exercises in honor of the Queen of Heaven and other Saints. While in the field or besieging a town, far from neglecting his prayers and penances, he redoubled them. He permitted in camp none of those vices so common to soldiers, but was always accompanied by zealous priests, who, by admonitions and preaching, kept the men from evil and guided them upon the right path. When he had conquered a city or gained a victory, his first care was to offer due thanks to God, after which the necessary steps were immediately taken to restore the true faith. Hence, he erected not only magnificent Churches and Convents, but also, with the consent of the Pope, founded several dioceses, and supplied them with such men as were able to preach the true religion to the infidels, and to sustain the Catholics in their faith. The infidels who refused to be converted to the true Church within a certain time, had to leave the cities he had conquered, in order that the Catholics might not be contaminated by associating with them. For the same reason, no heretics were allowed to remain in his dominions, and those who were detected secretly disseminating their heresy were imprisoned. Having taken the populous city of Seville, he had an image of the Blessed Virgin carried with great solemnity, upon a triumphal car, through the city, and deposited it in the principal Church. He himself, with all his courtiers and all the officers of the army, accompanied this magnificent procession, to show to the world under whose protection he had conquered the city. An immortal and admirable remembrance of this king is the fact that during his many and long campaigns, he never burdened his subjects with more taxes on this account. He rather endeavored to lighten their load than to increase it; because he believed that God had placed him over them for their benefit and comfort, and not for their oppression. When it was one day said to him that he might, with an untroubled conscience, take the possessions of the Clergy, the revenues of the Chapters, the gold and silver vessels, the candelabra and pictures of the

Churches, and use them for the maintenance of the poor, as it would be done in the cause of religion; he gave this memorable answer: "Of the Churches and the Clergy I ask neither gold nor silver, only prayers; and so far as my subjects are concerned, I must state that I fear the ill-wishes of an old woman more than the armies of the enemy. He who has placed me upon the throne, is powerful enough to give me all the means I need." And in truth, Providence assisted him in such a manner, that he was always provided with the means to continue his glorious wars against the infidels.

When at length it pleased the Lord of Armies to call into his triumphant Church the pious king who had so long and so valiantly fought for the honor of God and the propagation of the true faith, He sent him a severe sickness, which was to remind him that his end was approaching. Ferdinand did not become faint-hearted; but after having made a penitent confession, he requested that he might receive Holy Communion and extreme unction. When the holy Eucharist was brought into his room, he gathered his last strength, and leaving his bed, put a cord around his neck, and kneeling down, he took the crucifix and kissed it most devoutly, asking pardon of his sins, and declaring that he desired to die in the Catholic religion, for the dissemination of which he had fought so many battles. After this he received Holy Communion and extreme unction, and remained some time in prayer. Later, he called his wife and children to him, and having given them his last instructions, he bade them farewell. He especially recommended to his heir the furtherance of the holy religion, and bade him reign over his subjects with the protecting care of a father. In his last moments, he saw a whole host of the dwellers in heaven, which filled his heart with great joy. After this, he asked for a burning candle, but before taking it, he said, with eyes raised towards heaven: "Lord, Thou hast given me a kingdom which before I possessed not: Thou hast also given me greater honor and power than I deserved: for all Thou hast bestowed upon me, receive my humble thanks. I return it all to the foot of Thy throne, but before all I give and commend to Thee my soul." Taking the candle, he looked upon the crucifix, saying "Jesus Christ, my Saviour and Redeemer, naked came I into the world, naked I shall leave it. Take Thou my soul and place it, through the merits of thy bitter sufferings and death, amid the number of Thy servants." Requesting the assembled Clergy to recite the Litany and to sing the *Te Deum Laudamus*, he bowed his head and resigned his soul, adorned with so many virtues, into the hands of Him for whose honor he had so valiantly combatted upon earth. This took place in the

year 1252, and on the 30th day of May. His holy body is to this hour incorrupt.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. King Ferdinand was always victorious when his enemies were also enemies of the Almighty. The cause of this was, that he always prayed for the assistance of God and the protection of Mary, and, on his side, left nothing undone to succeed. You also have sworn in holy baptism to uphold the banner of Christ; you have become a soldier of Christ. As long as you live, you have to fight against evil inclinations and vice; but especially against the spirits of hell who are God's bitterest enemies, as well as yours. The heaviest battle you will have to fight, will be in the last hours of your life, when these enemies will exert all their power to vanquish you. If you conquer then, the crown of eternal glory will be your reward. But woe to you during all eternity, if you are vanquished! What course have you to pursue? First, do now all that it is possible for you to do. Accustom yourself from this moment to fight valiantly against the enemies of your soul. "Labor as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (I Tim. ii.), says St. Paul. "Fight the good fight." "For he also that strives for the mastery, is not crowned unless he strive lawfully" (II Tim ii.). If you accustom yourself from this time to fight the evil spirits and to conquer them, you will have reason to hope, that you will also be victorious in your last fight. Secondly: pray now, while you are alive, for God's aid, and also for the protection of the Blessed Virgin. If God is with you, hell will have no power against you. "If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear," said David (Psalm xxvi.); because he had placed his trust in

Providence. If you are under the protection of Mary, neither the power nor the rage of your enemies can harm you; for Mary is invincible in their eyes. She either, like a well-appointed army, drives them away from you, or obtains from God grace and strength for you, that you may happily vanquish them yourself. "If you are under her protection," writes St. Bernard, "you cannot fall."

II. What has been said of the solicitude of the holy King for his subjects, whom he did not wish to oppress with new burdens, but, on the contrary, endeavored to relieve of the old ones, and of the reasons he gave for this, should be well considered by every one who has subjects on whom he can lawfully levy contribution. There are now, as there were formerly, counsellors or officers who make themselves favorites with their masters, and who, having the reputation of watching over their interests, devise all possible schemes by which they may take from the people to enrich the Sovereign. Hardly ever does one of them represent the needs of the people in a true light, and suggest means to relieve them; but they rather devise new burdens, as the younger counsellors of King Roboam did. Sometimes it is said that the new tax will last only for a short time, as certain reasons render it necessary. But when is this time ended, or who will remind the head of the Government of the promise made to the people? Woe to such wicked counsellors! The holy King Ferdinand feared more the evil wishes of one poor woman, than an array of enemies. Have not such counsellors much more to

fear, if they consider the complaints and misery of so many people, the great injury they do to them, the bitter tears they cause, and the blood which they press from the poor, and which cries to Almighty God for vengeance? Have they not to fear that they precipitate themselves and those they serve into ruin in this life and in the other, as was the lot of the wicked counsellors of King Roboam? The holy King Ferdinand knew well that it was his duty to do good and to give comfort to his subjects; therefore he refused to burden them heavily. Holy writ calls spiritual as well as temporal rulers, shepherds. A shepherd is for the sheep, not the sheep for the shepherd. A shepherd is for the benefit and protection of the sheep. He cannot do with them as he chooses: he can shear them at the proper time, but if he shears them too frequently or too much, he injures them and himself. He may shear them, but to flay them or devour them is not allowed to any shepherd, if the flock belongs to a noble Lord. The meaning of this is easily comprehended. A counsellor may say to his government that taxes, duties and other lawful contributions can be demanded and taken with justice from the people; but with what conscience can he advise, that, without need, or other important cause, they should be burdened with a new load? He may say that in case of real need more than usual can be asked of the people; but he must also lighten the imports, when the cause no longer exists.

The merciful God is able to give to all sovereigns true conscientious

counsellors, and to the whole world rulers as much concerned for the well-being of their subjects as Ferdinand was. A ruler, let his title be what it may, would deserve pity, if he had a counsellor as we have described above, and gave ear to his advice. Terrible are the menaces of God against all those who do not justly govern those under them. "Woe to the shepherds of Israel," writes the prophet Ezekiel, "that feed themselves: should not the flock be fed by the shepherds? You ate the milk and you clothed yourselves with the wool, and you killed that which was fat: but my flock you did not feed. The weak you have not strengthened, and them that were sick you have not healed, &c." (Ezekiel xxxiv.) In the book of Wisdom, we read: "Hear therefore, ye Kings, and understand; learn, ye that are judges of the ends of the earth. Give ear, you that rule the people. . . . For power is given you by the Lord, and strength by the Most High: who will examine your works, and search out your thoughts: because, being ministers of his Kingdom, you have not judged rightly, nor kept the law of justice, nor walked according to the will of God. Horribly and speedily will he appear to you. For a most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule. For to him that hath little, mercy is granted: but the mighty shall be mightily tormented &c." (Wisdom vi.) My reader, learn from the foregoing that the people should pray daily for their rulers, that God may aid them with His grace to their own salvation, and to the welfare of those who are under them.

THIRTY-FIRST DAY OF MAY.

ST. PETRONILLA, VIRGIN, AND ST. ANDREW OF CHIO, MARTYR.

St. Petronilla is called, both in the Roman Martyrology and by several historians, a daughter of the Apostle St. Peter. Whether she was, however, his own, or only a spiritual daughter, is uncertain. The latter is affirmed by the Bollandists, who say that Petronilla was called daughter by St. Peter, in the same manner in which he called St. Mark his son, when he writes: "The Church that is in Babylon elected together with you, saluteth you, and so doth my son, Mark." Mark was taught and baptized by St. Peter, and thus, through the Gospel, born again to Christ, our Lord. This is also the meaning of the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "Through the Gospel I have begotten you." Those who affirm that Petronilla was the true daughter of St. Peter, are all of opinion that she must have been born before St. Peter became an Apostle, as he left his wife and broke all other ties, as appears from his words to Christ: "Behold, we have left all and followed Thee." It is, however, quite certain that Petronilla highly prized her virginity, and consecrated it to God by vow. It is also recorded that God had tried her with a tedious sickness, and when some persons were astonished that St. Peter, who healed so many, did not bestow the same benefit on her, he replied to them: "Because sickness is more salutary for her than health." This answer satisfied the questioners and endued St. Petronilla with patience. After some time, however, God not only restored her health and beauty, but bestowed on her the gift of healing the ailments of others. Flaccus, a noble Roman, desired her in marriage, and acquainted her with his wish. But Petronilla, determined to die rather than break her vow to God, declared unhesitatingly that she never would marry. As Flaccus discontinued not his endeavors to persuade her with flatteries and promises and even threats, and as she feared that he might use violence, she asked for three days to consider his request, which he willingly granted. As soon as Petronilla was so far safe, she prayed humbly to Christ, her divine Bridegroom, not to forsake her in her need. In thus praying she continued until the third day, and as she trusted that God would rather call her to the heavenly marriage-feast, than permit her to be forced to what she detested, she prepared herself, by receiving the holy sacraments, for her last hour. She was not deceived in her hope; for when, after having finished her devotion on the third day, she

lay down, death closed her eyes, and thus she ended her pure and holy life.



To this short sketch of a chaste virgin, I will add what the Church history records of a chaste youth, who became a martyr, although his glorious death took place on March 29th, 1455. His name was Andrew of Chio, after the island of that name, on which he was born. Becoming dangerously sick, he had recourse to the Blessed Virgin, promising to make a vow of celibacy, if he should obtain health through her intercession. His prayer was heard and answered, and he made the promised vow and kept it until his death. Some time after, he made a voyage to Constantinople, where the Mahommedans held sway. They had a law by which every one, who forsook Mahomet and became a Christian, was doomed to capital punishment. Andrew had always been a Christian; hence had never been a follower of Mahomet; yet some merchants from Egypt, having seen Andrew at Constantinople with the Christians, accused him of having forsaken Christianity at Alexandria and embraced Mahommedanism, and of again renouncing it. This accusation came to the ears of the judge, who summoned Andrew into his presence. Andrew testified clearly that he had always been a Christian and never embraced Mahommedanism, nor had he even been at Alexandria. The judge, however, was not satisfied, but requested Andrew to become a follower of Islam, promising him, in return, a captaincy and a rich marriage, if he consented, but threatening the most horrible tortures in case of refusal. Andrew undauntedly replied, that he was ready to suffer the most cruel martyrdom, rather than renounce Christ and become a follower of the false prophet. The judge immediately ordered him to be cast into prison, and loaded with chains. The following day, March 20th, his martyrdom began.

They led the valiant confessor of Christ out of the city, and binding him to a stake which they had erected for the purpose, commenced by cruelly scourging him. At first, overcome by the greatness of the suffering, he raised his hands as much as he was able, pressed them together and cried: "O Virgin Mary, come to my aid!" Mary, the merciful mother, did not withhold her assistance; for, from that moment, he stood immovable until evening without a sign of pain, when they brought him back to prison, anointing his wounds with healing balm, and giving him a delicious cordial, that he might gain strength and be able to endure his torments so much longer. They hoped by this means to induce him at last to forsake his faith. The Christian

hero prayed humbly to God for grace to suffer still more for the sake of his Redeemer. On the following day he appeared entirely healed. When the barbarians ascribed this to the restoratives they had administered to him, he contradicted them and said: "You are mistaken: neither your prophet nor your balm has effected this; but the grace of Christ, my Saviour, for love of whom I suffer." After this they continued with new tortures, until they beheaded him on March 29th. They tortured him daily in a new manner. On the 21st, they tore his back with iron hooks; on the 22nd, stretching out his hands and feet, they whipped him fearfully; on the following day, tore his skin and flesh from his shoulders to the bones; they then did the same with his back and thighs. On the 26th, they cut the flesh in pieces from his cheeks, and on the 27th, from his loins. The next day, they scourged him again, cut one cheek entirely out of his face; and at last, on the 29th, they beheaded him. At every new torture, the invincible Christian hero manifested, at first, a very natural horror; but no sooner had he called on the Virgin mother to aid him, than he became insensible amid all the torments. They refreshed him every day with strengthening restoratives, and he appeared every morning, after his prayers, in perfect health. It was the desire of God to manifest clearly to the barbarians, His power and the might of the Christian faith; that no excuse should be left them for remaining in their darkness. Many were converted, not only in consequence of so visible a miracle, but also by the fortitude of St. Andrew. The executioners intended to cast his holy body into the sea, but finally yielded to the request of the Christians and allowed them to take it. It was buried with great honors, and found, after many years, still in a state of perfect preservation.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Petronilla's patience became strengthened by the representation that sickness was more salutary to her than health. May you also strengthen your patience with the same thought when you are sick. For it is certain that sickness is often more beneficial to your salvation than health. Because many, in their sickness, arrive at a knowledge of the Almighty, of whom they formerly neither knew, nor desired to know anything. Many begin in the hour of suffering to think more earnestly of their salvation. Many during the tedious hours of sleepless nights repented of their sins, and began a better life, which, perhaps would not have been the case had not God laid them low with disease. And, to speak generally, many sins would be committed by sick people, if they were well; but because they are tried by disease, they have to abstain from them, to their great benefit. "How many, says St. Augustine, are pious and innocent in sickness, who, if they were

well, would plunge deeply into vice. Hence, health is pernicious to many persons, and sickness beneficial." Consider this truth in sickness, and let it bear to you the fruit of patience. It will also serve to convince you how truly St. Humbert speaks when he says: "Sickness is often a much greater benefit and a much higher grace of God than health."

II. St. Andrew would rather suffer the most terrible pains, than offend the Almighty by forsaking the true faith: he would rather die the most cruel death, than commit a mortal sin. His horror of sin was much greater than his fear of death. He displayed, during his cruel agony a wonderful strength of mind, for which he was indebted to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, whose aid he had so humbly requested. How great is your horror of sin? You often say with your lips: "rather die than offend God;" but how do you act? You offend Him again and again, although you have to fear neither death nor torments. Do you call this having a horror of offending God? Oh! that you could conceive a greater horror of sin!

for, in truth it is a greater evil than death itself. And how is it with your fortitude and patience in suffering? You know yourself, how despondent, restless and impatient you are, when the smallest evil befalls you. Oh! call frequently and with confidence the Blessed Virgin to your aid. Ask her to intercede for you, that you may be graced with a horror of sin, and with patience to bear what the justice of God has seen fit to send you. She will listen to you, and laying your petition before the throne of the Almighty, obtain what you request. St. Bernard, considering how willing Mary was to aid the bridegroom to whose marriage-feast she had been invited, says: "If she felt pity for the confusion of him who had invited her, how much more compassion will she have with us when we fervently call to her." St. Bernardin says: "If she did this, unasked, what will she refuse if she is supplicated? If she did this on earth, what will she do now that she is reigning in heaven?"

NOTICE. To-day is the last day of the month. To-morrow begins a new one. Remember the advice I gave, at the close of last month, in regard to these two days.

FIRST DAY OF JUNE.

ST. PAMPHILUS, PRIEST AND MARTYR.

St. Pamphilus, who is called in the Roman Martyrology, a man great in learning and holiness, and of more than usual kindness to the poor, was a native of Berytus in Phœnicia. He was the son of not less virtuous than noble parents who guided his education with great care, and had him instructed thoroughly in the Catholic faith. He commenced his studies at home and afterwards continued them at Alexandria, in Egypt, with so much success, that he was considered one of the most learned men of his time. Indefatigable as he was in profane studies, he was equally devoted to true piety, for which cause St. Jerome gives

him great praise. At Cæsarea, where he afterwards made his home, he obtained, in a short time, great honors and riches, on account of his remarkable talents, erudition and virtue. No sooner, however, had he arrived at the knowledge that all this was vain and empty, than he gave the greater portion of his wealth to the poor, and entered the secular priesthood. Agapius, then bishop of Cæsarea, ordained him, and from that period, the Saint shone among the priests as the Sun among the other celestial bodies. He studied the Holy Bible with great zeal, comprehending the necessity of so doing to refute heresy. To this end, he founded at Cæsarea a considerable library, stored it with the choicest books; taught the Clergy, and made himself invaluable by explaining holy Writ, and thus opposing heresy with the truth of the Christian faith, and confuting false doctrines. Besides this, he took a father's care of the poor. All he possessed was at their disposal, and no needy person ever left him without having received aid and comfort.

Meanwhile, a terrible persecution of the Christians took place, and no one was permitted to buy or sell in the market, or even to draw water, without having first burned incense before an idol. For this purpose idols were placed in the market and at all corners of the streets. Most Christians remained constant, and refused to make the required sacrifice, which caused many of them to be cruelly executed in various ways. One might have supposed that the flow of Christian blood would at last have appeased the thirst of the tyrants; but it had a contrary effect, and only incited them to new cruelties. Daily were great numbers of Christians most terribly tortured. Neither age nor sex was spared; and the more barbarously the Prefect of a district treated the Christians, the more he gained the favor of the heathen Emperors, Dioclesian and Maximian, and of their successor, Maximus. Such a Prefect in Palestine was Urbanus. When he commenced to torture the Christians, he immediately seized Pamphilus, as he had been informed that he was regarded as the most eminent teacher of the Christians at Cæsarea. The Emperor himself, having heard so much in praise of Pamphilus, desired to see him. Having summoned him into his presence, he pressed him to forsake his faith, at first by flatteries and promises, and afterwards by dreadful menaces. As, however, the holy priest despised both with Christian fortitude, the Emperor gave orders that his body should be torn with iron hooks. The command was obeyed with such rage, that even the tyrant shuddered when he beheld the awful spectacle. But nevertheless he ordered the Saint to be dragged into a dungeon that exhaled the most noxious miasma, and after a few days to suffer the same cruelty

Although Firmilian, who succeeded Urbanus in the administration of Palestine, kept Pamphilus imprisoned two years longer, he allowed him sometimes to visit his friends, which gave the Saint opportunities to strengthen the faithful by devout discourses and to convert many heathens by expounding to them the doctrines of Christianity. At the expiration of two years, several Christians came from Cilicia, who fearlessly and publicly confessed their faith. The Prefect being apprised of it, ordered their immediate arrest, and they were happily cast into the same prison where Pamphilus was confined. Rejoiced at being able to assist them, the holy man cheered and encouraged them to remain firm during their martyrdom, which was to begin on the following day. One of these, Porphyrius, a youth only eighteen years of age, was burned alive, another crucified, and still others executed in different ways. Firmilian caused Pamphilus also to be brought before him, together with the deacon Valens, and asked him in few words, if he had relaxed in his obstinacy during his imprisonment. Pamphilus replied as before, that he would rather give his life a thousand times than become faithless to Christ. The Prefect did not wait to hear more, but ordered the Saint to be beheaded, together with the deacon and several of their companions, which accordingly was done in the year 309 after the birth of our Saviour. The joy which Pamphilus experienced when he heard his death-sentence, cannot be described. He thanked the Almighty for the grace given to him, by confirming with his blood, the faith which his lips had so often expressed. Firmilian had given orders that the bodies of the holy Martyrs should be given a prey to wild beasts; but for four days and nights none came in sight. Hence, the Christians, taking courage, buried the holy relics with all due honors.

During the martyrdom of St. Pamphilus and his companions, there came to Cæsarea a youth, named Julian, who was renowned for his zeal in the practice of the true faith. When, on entering the city, he heard that several Christians were being executed on account of their faith, he hastened to the place of execution to witness the glorious contest of the holy Martyrs. But it was too late. The fight was over, and the holy bodies of the Martyrs were lying dead upon the ground. Julian sank down before them, and embraced one after another with joy and respect, in the presence of many of the heathens. He was immediately seized and brought before Firmilian, who was enraged at the thought that the most awful torments had no other effect upon the Christians than to inflame their desire to suffer for Christ's sake. He therefore ordered Julian to be burned like St. Porphyrius, at the stake, which order was executed on the same day.

Julian rejoiced when surrounded by the flames, and praised God till his end. So great at that period was the hatred of the heathens against the Christians: so great, likewise, was the desire of the Christians to suffer and die for Christ's sake.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Pamphilus endeavored by devout discourses to strengthen the faithful in the true faith and to convert the pagans. In this manner he used his tongue most praiseworthy to the benefit of his neighbor. At other times he used it also more directly to the praise and honor of God. How do you use your tongue? Of course, sometimes for prayer, to receive holy communion, for devout conversation, hence to the honor of God, and the benefit of your neighbor. But how often do you also use it to offend God and to harm your neighbor? And yet, how inconsistent, how wicked it is that the same tongue with which to-day you honor God by pious songs or discourses, you offend Him with to-morrow by lying, cursing, slandering and other similar vices. How terrible is the wrong you do to the Almighty when you soil by sinful speeches, a tongue which has been sanctified by partaking of the holy sacrament. "It is the greatest wrong," writes St. Jerome, "that you soil, with the mire of sin, those lips and that tongue with which you confess to the Lord your God, pray to Him, and praise Him. I cannot comprehend how a man dares to lie, to curse, or to defame his neighbor with the same tongue which he praises the Lord." St. Chrysostom writes: "How shall we obtain pardon of God, when we use the tongue, with which we receive the holy Eucharist, in the service of the Evil One? What punishment have we to expect?" Consider this point well, my reader, and learn from it how you should use your tongue, considering that you

praise God and receive the holy sacrament with the same. Do not misuse it to offend God. Do not dishonor or desecrate it. "Our mouth, our tongue, have no little honor in receiving the body of Our Lord. This all should consider who talk sinfully. They should be horrified at the thought, what mouth, what tongue, they soil and desecrate." Thus writes St. Chrysostom. It is wise therefore to follow the admonition of St. Augustine, who says: "Wherever you happen to be, at home, or abroad, at your meals, or in company, you should be watchful that no sinful or impious words pass your lips; persuade your neighbor to do the same, and converse in an honest, good and edifying manner; that neither they nor you, by slander, by impure songs or words, or by other wicked discourses, dangerously wound the tongue which ought to praise the Lord."

II. St. Pamphilus was not satisfied with the fact that he had protected the true faith both by word and writing, but testified to it with his blood. You have no occasion to testify to the true faith with your blood, but you are obliged to confess it by words and deeds. Your words and deeds must be such that they may lead to the conclusion that you are a Catholic. Have they been such? Have you not spoken like a heretic in matters of faith, of the Commands, the Ceremonies or the clergy of the Catholic Church? Have you not wantonly transgressed the Commands like a heretic? In doing good works have you not been so indolent that one might be led to

suppose that you believe what many heretics teach, namely, that faith alone justifies and saves? Oh! that cannot be called testifying to the Catholic faith by words and deeds. You must not only in your heart believe the teachings of the Catholic Church but you must also speak, think

and live like a Catholic. Faith in the heart only is not sufficient to save. "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he has faith, but hath no works? Shall faith be able to save him? Do you see that by works a man is justified and not by faith only?" (James ii.)

SECOND DAY OF JUNE.

STS. PETER, MARCELLINUS, BLANDINA AND PONTICUS, MARTYRS.

St. Peter was an exorcist, which is one of the minor orders by which the Church gives power and authority to cast out evil spirits. The many miracles he wrought by this means, actuated the heathens to accuse him before the governor, Serenus, who had him so cruelly scourged, that his whole body seemed to be but one great wound. After this they dragged him to a dark dungeon, and loaded him with heavy chains, in order that he might thus pine away in a slow martyrdom. Artemius, the jailor, had an only daughter, named Pauline, who was most miserably tormented by the devil, to the great grief of her father. One day, Peter perceived the man's sadness, and asked him the cause. Having been informed of it, Peter said: "If you have no other grief, you can easily be helped." "How can this be done?" asked Artemius; "who is the man able to cure my daughter?" "I," replied Peter, "I can, by the omnipotence of the true God whom I worship."

Artemius laughed in derision, and said: "If this be true, you must be a fool, that you do not use the power of God to free yourself from your fetters and escape from the prison." Peter answered: "I love my chains and prison too dearly, to pray to God to set me free. If you, however, promise to believe in Christ, the Son of the living God, I assure you that He will soon free me from my fetters and my prison." "Very well," said Artemius, more in mockery than in earnest, "if you free yourself this night and come to visit me, I will believe." After this he went away; but first had Peter more strongly chained, and also doubled the guards. Peter, nevertheless, promised to visit him; and he kept his promise.

Artemius, meanwhile, told his wife, Candida, all that had taken place, and while he was yet laughing at Peter's presumption, behold! the holy confessor of Christ entered the room, in a white garment, with a cross in his hand. This evident miracle fright-

ened Artemius and his wife to such a degree, that they knew not what to say. Having somewhat recovered, they fell at his feet and cried, while tears streamed from their eyes: "Truly, there is no God but the God of the Christians!" Upon this, Pauline came into the room, and also threw herself at the feet of the Saint, when a new miracle took place. The evil spirit of which she was possessed, unable to endure the presence of St. Peter, left her immediately, crying loudly: "The power of Christ in you compels me to leave the place where I have dwelt."

These miracles could not remain concealed. All the domestics of the house, all the neighbors, and relatives came in haste, and when they had heard what had happened, they all desired to be baptized. St. Peter, rejoiced at the conversion of so many souls, called the holy priest Marcellinus to instruct and baptize the proselytes. Artemius, meanwhile, went back to the dungeon and liberated not only all the imprisoned Christians, but offered freedom to all the other prisoners who promised to become Christians. Serenus, the governor, was fortunately just then dangerously sick, so that St. Marcellinus and St. Peter had time to baptize and instruct all those who wished to embrace Christianity, and also to prepare them for the martyrdom which doubtless awaited them.

No sooner had Serenus recovered than he ordered Artemius to send all the prisoners to him. Artemius went to him and related all that had happened, confessing at the same time that he and his whole household had embraced the Christian faith in consequence of the great miracles which they had beheld with their own eyes. Serenus, beside himself with rage, ordered Artemius to be beaten with clubs so terribly, that he would most certainly have expired, had not God, by a new miracle, preserved his life. After this he summoned Marcellinus and Peter and menaced them with the most cruel tortures should they refuse immediately to sacrifice to the idols. Seeing their fearless constancy, he ordered Peter to be thrown into a dungeon and stretched upon the rack; and Marcellinus to be scourged and then placed naked and tightly bound upon pieces of glass, so that he would be unable to move. God, however, sent an angel in the middle of the night, who took the chains from Marcellinus, healed his wounds, led him into the dungeon of St. Peter and freed him also from his fetters. The two Saints then went together to the house where the newly baptized Christians were assembled at prayer. When Serenus, on the following day, was informed of these events, all his rage fell upon Artemius and his wife, whom he sentenced to be buried alive. Whilst these martyrs were led to the place of execution, Saints Peter and Marcel-

linus encouraged them to constancy in their martyrdom, which they joyfully and faithfully endured. Marcellinus and Peter were again seized on this occasion, and after having been tortured, were beheaded by order of the prefect, in the year 304.

Their relics were transported from Rome to Germany in the reign of Louis the Pious. They are at present honored in the famous abbey of Seligenstadt.



St. Erasmus, of whom the Roman Martyrology also speaks to-day, was Bishop in the Patriarchate of Antioch, at the close of the third century. He was seized by order of the Emperor Dioclesian, and in consequence of his undaunted confession of Christ, first beaten with clubs. The tormentors then poured melted rosin, sulphur, wax and boiling oil over him. God, however, preserved His faithful confessor entirely unharmed, which caused many of the assembled witnesses to become converted to the true faith. Dioclesian, enraged at this, ordered Erasmus to return to the dungeon that his torments might be renewed the following day. But God, during the night, sent an angel, who opened the door of his prison and led him to Lucrino in Apulia. There he soon became celebrated on account of the many miracles which he wrought to testify to the true faith. Maximian, the tyrant, summoned him therefore into his presence, and finding him immovable in his confession of the Christian faith, he had him cruelly tortured. Among other torments was the following: they threw him into a cauldron filled with boiling oil and tar, out of which he rose again, unhurt. After this they put on him a red-hot cuirass, which, however, had no power to injure him. Again, in the following night, came an angel, who set him free and took him on board of a ship which sailed to Formio, a city in Campania, where he preached the Gospel for a short time, and was at last called to receive his eternal reward.

Some authors say that the tyrant ordered his entrails to be torn out, and that the Saint ended his life during this barbarous martyrdom.



To the three glorious martyrs, Peter, Marcellinus and Erasmus, I will add two more, who, although younger in years, were not less faithful to the truth. They belong to the number of those Christian heroes, who, in the year 177, were executed at Lyons, in divers barbarous ways. Their names were Blandina and Ponticus. The former was a servant-girl, about 18 years of age, and of a delicate constitution. She was seized with her mistress, and all those who had to suffer martyrdom at that time

were afraid that on account of her physical weakness, she would be unable to remain firm. God, however, endowed her with such Christian heroism, that even the heathens were astonished. At first, she was tortured a whole day in different ways. The only words she spoke during her sufferings, were: "I am a Christian; no wickedness is found among us." After this, they tied her upon a cross and gave her to wild animals which they set upon her: but none of them would touch the Christian heroine. Taking her from the cross, they dragged her back to the prison. The next day, she was again taken to the place of execution and cruelly tormented together with Ponticus, a youth of scarcely 15 years, whom she encouraged, until he expired under the most terrible tortures. The heathens now proceeded to spend their whole rage on Blandina. They whipped her, cast her before wild beasts, and made her sit on a red hot iron stool. She was then wrapped in a net and exposed to a wild bull that tossed her for a time hither and thither, and at last threw her high up into the air. As, however, this incomparable Christian heroine remained uninjured, the tyrant ordered her to be beheaded; and thus did this holy servant-girl end her glorious martyrdom.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The holy Martyrs, whose lives you have to-day contemplated, suffered so much and so cruelly, that you are perhaps inclined to think the account of their suffering exaggerated. But ancient and authentic testimony allows no sensible person to doubt the above narrated facts. Should you, however, still doubt it, tell me the reason why? Is it because you cannot comprehend how weak human beings can joyfully endure such fearful pain? But is it unknown to you that God is mighty in His Saints? Do you believe in the omnipotence of the Creator? Well, then, believe also that He can strengthen a feeble creature far above natural endurance. Believe that He can close the jaws of the wild beast, that He can take from the fire all power to burn, and that He can keep those, who so courageously confess Him, unharmed

amid all dangers. All this He did in the Old Testament, as is known from holy Writ. Do you suppose, then, that the arm of the Lord has lost its strength in the New Testament? God worked such miracles by the holy Martyrs in order that the heathens might learn the truth of the Christian Religion and the faithful be strengthened in confessing it. Learn from it what you, although only a weak human being, may be able to do by the grace of God, if you pray to obtain it and make a good use of it. You will see that you can do everything in Him who strengthens you.

II. God sometimes sent an angel to the holy Martyrs to comfort them or to save them from the hands of the tyrants; but at other times He allowed them to suffer and to die in their torments. Just so has He done with many others both in the

Old Testament and in the New ; as is known by the lives of St. Peter and St. Paul, whom at one time he saved out of the dungeon and at another time he did not. He also freed some of his servants entirely from persecution and misfortune : an example of which we see in Daniel and his three companions ; while He permitted others to die in poverty and sickness, or 'else to suffer innocently and perish by cruel hands. Poor Lazarus, perishing in his sickness, is a proof of the former ; St. John the Baptist, the holy Prophets and Apostles are examples of the latter. God still acts in the same manner. Sometimes he releases us from a cross, a sickness or a persecution, when we pray to him ; sometimes not. To one man He shows His power and saves him ; another He lets hang on the cross and die. But all He

does is for our salvation. Therefore, if you call on God and He answers your prayer, offer Him your heartfelt thanks. If He does not answer it, if He does not remove your cross, if He allows you to languish and die in poverty, sickness and persecution ; submit to His holy will. Think that He did the same to the Saints, and that He seeks to save by thus proving you. "If I shall find grace in the sight of the Lord, He will bring me back again. But if He should say to me : Thou pleasest me not : I am ready, let Him do that which is good before Him." Thus spoke David, when he had to flee from Jerusalem on account of the persecution of his son Absalom. He submitted entirely to the divine will and showed himself ready to bear all that God might ordain. May you follow his example

THIRD DAY OF JUNE.

ST. CLOTILDIS, QUEEN OF FRANCE.

St. Clotildis, to whose unwearying zeal France is mostly indebted for having received the Christian faith, was a daughter of Chilperic, King of Burgundy. After her father had been made prisoner of war and beheaded by his own brother Gondebald, and her mother drowned by the same, she was brought up at the court of the murderer of her parents. God, however, so directed, that she was placed under a very pious governess, who led her in the path of virtue. She was gifted with such wonderful beauty, that none of the ladies of her period could be compared with her ; whilst she possessed such excellent qualities of mind and heart, that she gained the highest esteem of all who knew her. Her talents and knowledge were such, that Gondebald trusted to her the management of his court, and when he was absent, the administration of the whole state. Her goodness was above all praise ; for, although educated at court, in the midst of dissipation, she always evinced more

inclination to virtue, more delight in devotional exercises, than in riches, honors, or worldly pleasures. She said her prayers with great attention and piety, never allowing anything to disturb her, because she knew that while praying she spoke to God and must listen to His voice. No day passed on which she was not present, with all due reverence, at Holy Mass, while her life was blameless and all her actions truly angelical. She gave alms with her own hands to the poor and encouraged them to patience and piety.

When Clovis, the king of France at that period, was informed of all this, he determined to seek Clotildis's hand in marriage. Hence he sent one of his first and ablest courtiers, named Aurelian, to Burgundy, to obtain the consent of the princess. Aurelian endeavored to obtain an interview with Clotildis, but having heard that no man was allowed to enter her dwelling, he disguised himself as a beggar, and mingled with the poor who waited for the coming of Clotildis before the door of the Chapel where she heard holy Mass. When the princess, according to her custom, gave to each an alms, the ambassador of king Clovis, also stepped forward, declaring who he was and why he had come to Burgundy. Clotildis, on listening to him, was at first greatly surprised, as Clovis at that time was still a heathen; but after a moment's reflection she said: "The wish of your Sovereign honors me greatly; but as his majesty is still a pagan, while I am a Christian, I cannot give him my word. Should, however, the king desire to become a Christian, then all my objections would cease." "Clovis, my king," replied the ambassador, "will surely not hesitate to fulfil your wishes." Taking leave of the princess after these words, he returned to France, while Clotildis, turning to God, prayed for divine assistance in an affair of so much importance. Clovis, rejoiced at the princess' answer, sent Aurelian again to Burgundy to the king to obtain his consent. The latter, however, fearing Clotildis might, when seated upon the throne, seek to revenge the death of her parents, hesitated at first, but was at last compelled to give his consent. Clotildis was brought to France, where Clovis received her joyfully, promising to become converted to the Christian faith.

Hardly had the young Queen entered her new home, when she regulated her daily life in such a manner that she made herself greatly beloved by God and men. She completely won the heart of the king by her virtues and amiability, but was unable to induce him immediately to receive the Christian faith. Hence she sought refuge at the throne of the Almighty, and offered her prayers, austere fasting, alms and other good deeds for the conversion of her husband. God crowned her pious endeavors

with the desired success; for when Clovis had to take up arms against his enemies, Clotildis exhorted him to keep constantly the God of the Christians before his mind, and to call on Him with confidence in all dangers: while she herself redoubled her prayers during his absence. During the battle, Clovis perceived that the enemies were much stronger than he, and that his army began to retreat. Vainly he called on his god for aid: but, suddenly, when the danger became more and more imminent, he recollected the exhortation of his wife, and asking the assistance of the God of the Christians, he promised to receive without further delay the Christian faith, if he should vanquish the enemy. No sooner had he made this promise, than the whole appearance of things changed. Order was at once restored in his men, who valiantly attacked the enemy already confident of victory, and fought so bravely, that they gained the day.

After this victory, the king hesitated no longer, but received instruction and baptism at the hands of Remigius, bishop of Reims. The court soon followed the king's example, and from day to day numbers of his subjects entered the true fold. The joy of the holy Queen was inexpressibly great; but not content with having converted the king to Christianity, she desired also to make a holy king of him, and endeavored to be a model to him of every virtue. By her advice he built many Convents and Churches in order to disseminate and preserve the true faith in the whole kingdom. Space is wanting here to tell all that the zealous queen did for the honor of God and the salvation of souls.

She lived 39 years after the death of Clovis, and lived during her widowhood as holily as she had lived as maiden and wife. She left the court and all royal pomp, and clad in very plain garments, went to Tours, where she dwelt near the grave of St. Martin, and lived a conventual life with her little household. Prayer, devout reading, meditation, visiting the church, alms-deeds and pious discourses with virtuous persons, were her only occupations and pleasure. She mortified her body by severe fasting and penances, not partaking of any food except bread, vegetables and water. She had many bitter trials during her widowhood, but she was never seen dejected, and an impatient word never passed her lips. Although invited to return to court, she remained constant in the life she had begun, loving her retirement too well. Thirty days before her end an angel appeared to her to announce the hour of her death. She was not frightened at the message, but calling her two sons to her side, exhorted them to love and harmony, made a public confession of

her faith, received with great devotion the holy sacraments, and continued in pious exercises, until, in her 70th year, her soul, adorned with so many virtues, ascended to heaven, to receive there a much more precious crown than she had worn on earth. Her last words were those of the Psalmist: "To thee, O Lord have I raised my soul; my God, my trust is in Thee. I shall not be confounded!"

The apartment in which she expired was filled with a heavenly light, and her holy body exhaled a delicious fragrance. It was brought to Paris and buried in the Church which king Clovis had built by the advice of Clotildis, and where his body was also reposing.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The life of the holy Queen Clotildis may be a lesson and an example to both sexes and to all classes of people. Unmarried persons may learn from it what their deportment should be, how they ought to live in retirement and piety, avoiding all unnecessary intercourse with the other sex, and seeking advice in prayer before entering the matrimonial state. The married should learn from it, how one may lead the other from evil ways to do good, by example and exhortations evincing in all this a truly Christian charity. The widowed ought to learn from her not to lead a luxurious, dissipated, frivolous life, but to exercise themselves in good works, and thus prepare themselves for a happy death. All Christians, especially those of high rank, may be instructed by her to pass their time in suitable work and charitable deeds: to advance the honor of God and the salvation of their neighbors: and further, not to become too much attached to honors and worldly treasures, but to strive after eternal joys, happiness and honors. "Do not love the world nor the things that are in the world" (1 Jno. ii. 15). "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right

hand of God: mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon earth." (Col. iii.).

II. St. Clotildis found her greatest delight in prayer, and offered it with great attention and devotion, knowing that she was speaking to God. When we remember that while praying we have the privilege of speaking with God, we ought to feel the greatest desire to pray, to find in it our greatest happiness, and to show a fervent devotion, not allowing anything to distract our attention. Hence, follow the advice of St. Chrysostom and St. Bernard, the first of whom writes: "If you go to pray, think that you appear at that happy court, where the King of Glory is present, surrounded by countless heavenly inhabitants whose eyes are upon you. Think that you have to speak to the King of all Kings about the salvation of your soul." St. Bernard, says: "When you go to Church, say: remain at the door, all ye worldly thoughts and cares! But thou, my soul, go and partake of the joys of the Lord!" Follow this counsel, and at the same time say to every power of your soul: "Come, let us prostrate ourselves and adore: let us weep before the Lord who created

us, because He is our Lord and our God." Endeavor to perform your prayers with true devotion, reverence and attention. Nothing is more conducive to this, than to remember before whom you appear. "while at prayer, says St. Anselm, man speaks to God. Hence he ought to consider how reverentially, humbly, and attentively he ought to speak to the greatest Lord, how

timidly with the highest Judge, how confidentially with his truest friend!" Therefore we ought not to give way to any distracting thoughts. "Can it ever be justified, asks St. Chrysostom, "if we are negligent, or not devout in our prayers; and while in the presence of the Almighty, we do not honor Him so much, as a servant does his master, a soldier his officer, or a friend his friend?"

FOURTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. MORANDUS, CONFESSOR.

St Morandus, famed throughout the whole province of Sund, was born of illustrious parents on the left bank of the Rhine, not far from the well-known city of Worms. In the same city he studied the liberal arts, and afterwards was ordained priest. He never deviated from the path of rectitude. Amidst many dangers of losing his innocence and angelic purity, he remained always unharmed, because he followed the direction of his confessor. Having entered the priesthood, he went to the celebrated Abbot Hugh of Cluny, desiring to be instructed in the most perfect manner of serving God. The discourses of this eminent man determined Morandus to leave the world and enter the monastery, so that, under the guidance of so celebrated a teacher, he might be better able to acquire Christian perfection. The zeal with which he commenced his probation never grew remiss, and all admired the punctuality with which he adhered to the most trifling rule. There was no virtue which was not reflected in the conduct of Morandus as in a mirror. Hugh soon perceived in him a particular desire to further the honor of God and the salvation of souls; hence he sent him, after a few years, to the monastery of Auvergne, to restore the monastic discipline, and to labor for the spiritual welfare of the people. Morandus was very successful in the accomplishment of his task, and was greatly aided by the gift of miracles which God had bestowed upon his faithful servant.

As time went on, Frederick, Count of Pfuert, requested St. Hugh to send him some priests to take charge of a Church which he had erected, and to instruct the people living near it

more thoroughly in the Christian faith: to which end he presented the Church to the monks together with some land from which to draw their subsistence. The Holy Abbot sent him some zealous men, among whom was Morandus. This gave the Saint a large field for his labor in the salvation of souls; and he was a true Apostle, not less unwearied in his efforts than he was intrepid in danger. He traversed the whole country with bare head and a staff in his hand, preaching almost daily in the Churches, and not only teaching and instructing in the houses but also in the streets. He admonished sinners to do penance, and encouraged the pious to perseverance in good works. He comforted the sad, assisted the needy and sick, and, in one word, became, like St. Paul, all to all, in order to bring all hearts to Christ. The many miracles which God wrought through him on the sick, gave him such reputation, that everybody was anxious to listen to his admonitions, and to live in accordance with them. How many souls St. Morandus gained for heaven by his untiring labor is known only to God. This, however, is certain, that from that period, the name of Apostle of the Sund-province was given him, which posterity has preserved to this day. Satan, who could not endure to look at the good results of this holy Apostle's labors, tried to obstruct his path in every possible manner. One day he even appeared visibly to him in the most frightful form, seeming about to devour him alive. Morandus, not in the least frightened or disturbed, drove him away with the sign of the holy Cross. With the same sign he once extinguished a great conflagration, which Satan had caused to break out in the monastery. By laying his hands on the possessed, he freed many of them from the Evil Spirit.

Count Frederick, who, as already said, had not only given a Church and house to the priests whom St. Hugh had sent him, but also the land they needed for their subsistence, nevertheless oppressed the tenants of the monastic lands with heavy taxes. One, who had not paid them punctually, was seized and put into prison. Morandus mildly represented to the Count the injustice of this action; but the Count refused to listen to him. God, however, would not leave unpunished the offence done to His servant. The Count was suddenly seized with palsy, and his mouth, with which he had sinned by uttering such insolent words to St. Morandus, became so distorted that it was fearful to behold. This opened the Count's eyes. Calling the holy man into his presence, he most humbly begged his pardon and aid. The Saint, however, said: "How can you ask help of him to whose admonitions you refused to listen? The punishment will still increase if you do not set the innocent prisoner free." The

Count immediately ordered his release, after which the Saint, touching the distorted mouth of the nobleman, restored it to its former position. Many similar miraculous cures are to be found in the life of the Saint.

At length it pleased God to call His faithful servant to receive his eternal recompense. He sent him, therefore, in the midst of his apostolic labors, a dangerous disease, which the Saint regarded as a messenger of death. He therefore carefully prepared himself for his last hour, although his whole life had been holy, and had therefore been the best preparation for a happy end. He not only bore the pains of his disease with Christian patience, but with joy and with the desire to suffer still more out of love to Him in whose honor he had until now labored so unceasingly. Death came at last to end his sufferings and his work, and to begin his reward in heaven.

The people of the surrounding country soon came in crowds to the tomb of the deceased Saint, on account of the miracles which God wrought there through his intercession. Several dwellings were erected contiguous to the monastery and Church, for the accommodation of the pilgrims; and thus at first a village, called Altkirch, and afterwards a town of the same name arose, while the monastery received its name from St. Morandus. In the year 1620, Arch-duke Leopold gave this cloister to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, who adorned the tomb of the Saint most magnificently. On each corner of the tomb stands an angel. The first has engraved on his shield a staff; the second, a book: the third, the sun: the fourth a bunch of grapes. Upon the first shield stands in latin: "Apostle, of the Sund-province;" upon the second: "Powerful in words;" upon the third, "Brilliant of descent and virtue;" and upon the fourth, "Powerful in works." These few words contain all that might be said in praise of the Saint. More would be known of his virtues and his labors had not the ancient documents been partially burned in time of war, partly stolen and torn, thus depriving posterity of their contents. But it should be sufficient incitement to honor the Saint—particularly to the inhabitants of the Sund-province—that St. Morandus was for them a true Apostle, brilliant of descent and virtue, powerful in words and works; through whose intercession to this day God grants many favors to those who go for refuge to his holy tomb.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Morandus regards the sickness sent to him by God as a messenger of death and prepares him-</p>	<p>self most carefully for his last hour, although his whole life had been a continual preparation for the same.</p>
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Whoever believes, as it is most assuredly true, that our eternity depends on our last hour, should not neglect it, but conduct himself in such a manner that his whole life may be a continual preparation for death. Whoever has failed in this, should be the more solicitous to do it in time of sickness. But even if life has been a worthy preparation for death, still after the example of St. Morandus, we ought not to neglect all that may make our last hour happy. "Sickness is often a messenger of death," says St. Anthony. It says to men what Isaias the prophet said to the sick King: "Take order with thy house, for thou shalt die!" (Isaias xxxviii.) It is true that death does not always follow sickness. We often recover, as was the case with the king; but whoever is anxious for his salvation, takes the surer road. He ought to turn his thoughts to God at the beginning of sickness, and prepare himself to die. Should he recover he will not repent having done so, and should he be taken away in that disease he will have a right to hope that he will be a partaker of eternal life. What is your determination? "My son," says the wise man, "in thy sickness neglect not thyself but pray to the Lord, and He shall heal thee. Turn away from sin, and order thy hands aright, and cleanse thy heart from all wickedness (Eccl. xxxviii.)

II. Death put an end to the many sufferings, to the great labor of St. Morandus: but it was at the same time the beginning of a reward which will never end. Death ends

the labors and sufferings of all men in this world, though it is not to all the beginning of an endless reward, but to many of eternal pain. To all men death comes as an end of the time which God granted them to work out their salvation: to all as the beginning of an eternity, where time has ceased to exist in which a man could save his soul. "Man shall go into the house of his Eternity," says Holy Writ. (Eccl. xii.)

As soon as man is born, he begins his travels toward Eternity. As long as he lives, he is upon the voyage. Each moment brings him nearer to death and to eternity. At last death ends this voyage and leads man into eternity. There he has to abide: there is his eternal home. "Man shall go into the house of eternity." In eternity is the house, the dwelling of man: in the world he has only a lodging which he soon has to leave. Oh! how blind and foolish are you if all your care is bestowed in making your lodgings pleasant, while you are travelling in this world, and give hardly a thought to your eternal home! Think then oftener of eternity, on the end of your voyage; and you will be less attached to your lodgings, to the world and all it contains: you will live in such a manner that your death, as was the case with St. Morandus, will end your suffering and your work, and become the beginning of your eternal reward. "Never will a servant of God be vanquished in a contest or become vexed with his work and suffering, if eternity fills his thoughts," says Thomas à Kempis.

FIFTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. BONIFACE, ARCHBISHOP AND MARTYR.

St. Boniface, the great Apostle of Germany, was a native of England. He was baptized under the name of Winfrid but received the name Boniface from the Pope, on account of the great *good* which he *did*. Boniface means one who does good. When scarcely 5 years old, he requested of his parents to be sent to a monastery, in order to be instructed by the monks as well in religion as in other sciences. His father opposed this wish, but falling sick and believing it a punishment sent by God, he gave his consent and recovered immediately. Winfrid received the instruction he desired in two monasteries; and took the habit of the religious of St. Benedict. How greatly his virtues and learning were esteemed by the brethren of this order, may be seen from the fact that in the course of a few years, they unanimously elected him successor of their late Abbot. Boniface, however refused to accept the dignity, and on making known his desire to preach the Gospel to the heathens, he succeeded so well in representing everything connected with his plan, that the monks not only abstained from further efforts to persuade him to yield, but gave him permission, with several others, whose hearts were filled with the same desire, to go to Rome and offer himself to the Pope for so holy a work. Hence, Boniface bade farewell to his brethren and left England with his companions. Gregory II., at that time Pope, was greatly rejoiced when Boniface informed him of his intention, and after having had several conversations with him on the subject, he gave him the powers of an Apostolic missionary, with full permission to preach the Gospel everywhere, especially in Germany. He presented him at the same time some relics and dismissed him with his pontifical blessing. Boniface, leaving Rome, went first to Bavaria, then to Thuringia, where the Christian faith was almost extinguished, and where idolatry and wickedness prevailed. In the space of 6 months he led the Christians to a better life, and cleansed almost the whole of Thuringia from idolatry.

During this time, Boniface received news of the death of Radbod, Duke of Friesland, an arch-enemy of the Christian faith, during whose reign the Saint had preached a short time in Friesland, but finding that he could do but little good, had quickly returned to England. Inspired, however, by God, he determined, now that circumstances had thus changed, to go once more to Friesland and endeavor to convert the inhabitants. On arriving at Utrecht, he went to St. Willibrord, first bishop of

the church there, and spent in the city and neighboring places three years in preaching and instructing the people. His success was so great, that all the inhabitants became Christians, all the idolatrous temples were overthrown or changed into Christian churches. After this, the indefatigable apostolic preacher went to Hesse, where in a very short time he converted many thousands to the Christian faith, built many churches and supplied them with pious priests. He also built several monasteries and convents for those who desired to serve God more perfectly. As however the Saint could not supervise so much work unaided, he called from England several zealous priests, who lent a willing hand to the work he had begun. He also invited some pious virgins, to govern the convents which he had erected. Several of his fellow-laborers were sent to Rome to inform the Pope of the progress of Christendom. The Pope was highly rejoiced and desired to see Boniface himself. The Saint therefore went a second time to Rome, was most kindly received by the holy Father, and consecrated bishop. It was at this time that his name Winfrid was changed into Boniface. Soon after this, the bishop returned to Germany. Hesse abounded yet with people still in the darkness of paganism. An immense tree which stood there was called the power or might of Jupiter, and it was worshipped as a god. The holy bishop could not endure this sacrilege, and although the pagans threatened to kill him if he touched the tree, he went to the place where it stood, and seized an ax to fell it. At the first stroke, the power of Jupiter, the immense tree, fell to the ground and was split into four parts. This visible miracle opened the eyes of the heathens and moved them to abandon idolatry. The bishop erected, in the place where the tree had stood, a chapel in honor of St. Peter. In Thuringia, whither he went next, he built a church in honor of the Archangel Michael on the place where the latter had appeared to him and exhorted him to continue bravely in the work that he had begun. Divers affairs of the Church made a third journey to Rome necessary; and Gregory III., who then occupied the chair of St. Peter, showed great honors to St. Boniface, and sent him back to Germany, after having bestowed on him, among many other graces, the title of apostolic legate. When, on his return, the Duke of Bavaria invited him to remain some time in his Dukedom, the holy man acquiesced, as this gave him an opportunity to convert the remaining heathens and lead those Christians, who had been seduced from the true faith by godless impostors, back upon the right path. By his holy conduct and incessant preaching he arrived at the desired end, and divided the whole country into four bishoprics, in order to give the newly converted better opportunities to be instructed

and preserved in the faith. Salzburg, Friesingen, Regensburg and Passau were the four cities where he established bishoprics, providing them with able men. The same he did soon after at Eichstadt and Wurzburg in Franconia, where he for some time labored to the great benefit of the heathens. The see of Eichstadt he gave into the charge of St. Willibald, that of Wurzburg to St. Burchard. He founded many convents and churches, as well in the above-named States as also in Thuringia and Hesse, especially at Fritzlar, Ehrfurt, Amœneburg and Fulda. He erected monasteries especially with the intention to educate such men in them as would be able to defend the true faith, to instruct the faithful in leading a Christian life, and to bring to the true Church those who were still heathens. He himself was created by the Pope archbishop of Mentz, where he remained for seven years in continued apostolic labor for the salvation of those in his charge.

Meanwhile, the greater part of the inhabitants of Friesland had again, for some unknown reason, forsaken Christianity, and returned to their former idolatry. No sooner had St. Boniface heard this, than he determined to proceed thither. Hence, with the permission of the Pope, he resigned the see of Mentz to his disciple Lullus, and set out for Friesland, accompanied by some zealous men, foremost among whom were Eobanus and Adelar. On arriving there, he began forthwith to preach, and converted a great number of the inhabitants to Christ. He baptized those whom he had sufficiently instructed, and others, who had been seduced to forsake the true faith, he reconciled with God and the Church. Happy in the consciousness of such great success, the Saint appointed a day on which he would publicly administer the holy Sacrament of confirmation to strengthen the newly converted in the faith. No church was large enough to contain the number of those who desired to be confirmed; in consequence of which tents were erected in an open field not far from the river Borne. The appointed day had come, and a large crowd of Christians had assembled, eager to receive the sacrament. Suddenly, however, came a band of heathens, who, incited by their idolatrous priests, had vowed to kill Boniface, as the greatest enemy of their idols. Armed with weapons they approached the holy man and his companions. When Boniface perceived them, he thanked God with a loud voice for having vouchsafed to him the long desired opportunity to die for Christ's sake; then having encouraged his companions bravely to suffer pain and death, he went to meet the barbarians, with the gospel, which he carried almost constantly with him, in his hands. He spoke fearlessly to them; but, not willing to lend ear to him, one

of them stabbed him with his sword with such force, that he sank dead to the ground. The companions of the Saint suffered the same death.

Thus gloriously did this truly apostolic man finish his laborious career, in the year 754, or according to other historians, 755, in the fortieth year after his arrival in Germany. How much he endured during these forty years, in wandering through so many lands and converting so great a number of people; how unweariedly he labored; what persecutions he suffered from heathens, from heretics, and even from wicked Catholics, is more easily imagined than described. But nothing could daunt his great heart, which, filled with love of God and man, untiringly executed what his apostolic zeal dictated. He seemed never satisfied with the work he had already performed, or with the suffering he had borne for the honor of God and the salvation of man. His insatiable desire to save souls incited him constantly to more work and more suffering. He feared no danger, but fervently desired to conclude his labors by receiving the crown of martyrdom. God granted his wish; after having lived for the Almighty alone, he was permitted to shed his blood for Christ. He was first buried at Utrecht, then removed to Mentz, and at last brought to Fulda by the Archbishop St. Lullus.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Boniface fearlessly meets his enemies who have come to kill him. Thus he wishes to imitate, in his last hour, the Saviour whom he had constantly followed during life. To follow Christ as closely as possible, is every man's duty. Whoever neglects this is no true Christian, and can have no hope to be saved. "I am no true Christian," says St. Bernard, "if I do not follow Christ." "Vainly does he bear the name of Christian, who does not follow Christ," writes St. Augustine. The hope of salvation if we do not follow Christ is taken from us by Christ himself by these words: "And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. x.). If you, therefore, desire to be a true Christian and hope to gain salvation, en-

deavor to follow Christ, your Lord, as St. Boniface did. If you do not venture to follow Christ so far as to meet suffering, as this Saint did, follow Him at least so far as to carry your cross patiently. Follow Him in gentleness, in humility, in fervency of prayer, in submission to God's holy will, in obedience, in love to your neighbor and in similar virtues.

II. During the space of 40 years St. Boniface suffered and labored for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. After this, he went through a glorious martyrdom, into the house of his eternity, where he now enjoys an indescribably great and everlasting reward. Yesterday you were told that every one, by death, enters the house of his eternity. Why is it called "*his eternity*?"

There are two eternities, one in heaven, the other in hell. Every human being will come into one of these, which is called *his* eternity. He cannot change from one eternity into the other, but will always remain where he entered by death. There will be his house, his abode; there he will dwell for ever. Whoever enters purgatory, belongs to the happy eternity of heaven. He dwells in purgatory only until he is completely cleansed, and after this, his house, his eternal abode is in heaven. Where will be your house, your abode? In heaven or in hell? The house, the abode of St. Boniface, is in the happy eternity of heaven. Why not in hell, like that of the rich man, the unhappy Judas, and of thousands of others? The answer to this is as follows: Because St. Boniface, during his earthly life, did not build himself a house in hell, like the rich man, Judas and thousands of others; but he built it in heaven. And how did he build it there? By avoiding sin; by good works, and by patience in sufferings and crosses. Impress deeply on your heart what I am now going to tell you. Every man builds himself a house in eternity, while living on earth. And in that eternity, in which he has built his house, he shall dwell. In that house, which he has built during his life, he is to

dwell for ever. By sin and vice, by the neglect of good works, man builds himself a house in hell; but by avoiding sin and doing good works, he builds himself a house in heaven. Can you now answer the question I addressed to you above: where will one day be your house, your abode? in heaven or in hell? Look back on your life and see how until now you have been building your house, and you will easily find the answer. Ah! your many sins and vices are surely no materials for building a house in heaven, but for one in hell. Have you then until the present moment been building your house in hell? Will you soon take possession of it and dwell in it? Consider well what you are doing! This I may say for your comfort: by true repentance you can tear down the house, and by perseverance in penance, by avoiding sin, by good deeds, patience in crosses and sufferings, you can yet build yourself a magnificent house, nay even a palace in heaven, and dwell therein eternally. You must, however, immediately begin to tear down the old house and to erect the new one. God grants you still time and grace. "Behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation" (II. Cor. vi.). Soon will it be said: "Time shall be no longer!" (Apoc. x.)

THE SIXTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. NORBERT, ARCHBISHOP AND FOUNDER OF THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN ORDER.

Norbert, the celebrated founder of the Premonstratensian order, was born of very illustrious parents at Santen, in the Duchy of Cleves. As he grew up, he was very eager in the acquisition of knowledge, but he also led a vain, frivolous life, in which he continued even when he was a canon of the Church in

his native place. He lived for some time at the court of Frederick, Archbishop of Cologne, and also at that of the Emperor, where he had opportunities to enjoy the pleasures of this world to which he was so much attached. The Almighty, however, who intended that Norbert should become a great Saint, made all this very distasteful to him by the following event. Norbert went, one clear, bright day, with his servant, to Freden, a village in Westphalia. He had not gone very far upon his way when suddenly a terrific storm darkened the sky, and a flash of lightning struck the earth just before the feet of the horse which Norbert was riding. He was thrown down, and remained lying on the ground almost an hour, more dead than alive. As soon as he had somewhat collected his scattered senses, he arose with the help of his servant, but sinking again upon his knees, he cried like another Saul: "Lord, what dost thou wish that I should do?" An audible voice replied: "Avoid evil and do good." And immediately Norbert determined to change his whole conduct and obey the heavenly command. Accordingly he repaired to the monastery of St. Siegebert, and began his conversion by a general confession, which he made with a flood of repentant tears. Soon after, he received the order of priesthood, so as to be still better secured against the frivolities of the world and to remain more constant in the service of the Almighty. He prepared himself during forty days for his first holy mass, by prayer, austere fasting and other penances; and he had no sooner said it, than he ascended the pulpit and preached with such power and pathos on the vanities of the world, that all his hearers were deeply touched. For three years he continued his penitential life; then resigned his canonicate, gave his fortune to the poor, and went to Pope Gelasius II., who was at that time in Languedoc, and begged most earnestly for permission to preach repentance wherever he could find an opportunity. He obtained the holy father's consent and went on his mission barefoot, in the depth of winter, from place to place. His life and his whole appearance were in harmony with his sermons; for, after having entered the priesthood, he had laid aside his costly garments, and wore a long mantle made of sheepskin, which was fastened round his loins with a cord. He partook only of lenten food, and of this so little that no one could understand how he could live. By his sermons he moved a great number of sinners to repentance, converted hardened heretics and united in love and harmony many embittered enemies.

The Bishop of Laon, in consideration of the great benefit derived from the sermons of St. Norbert, requested him most earnestly to remain in his diocese and to select, as a dwelling for

himself and his companions, any place agreeable to him. The Saint chose a dreary, solitary spot in a barren valley called Premontre, where stood a half-ruined chapel. The bishop bestowed the place upon him with pleasure and gave also the means to renew the chapel and build a small monastery near it. St. Norbert, with thirteen companions who desired to live under his direction, made his abode there as soon as the buildings were completed, and thus was laid, in the year 1121, the first foundation of the celebrated order which, after the valley, was called the Premonstratensian order. The holy founder received the rules and the habit in a vision from Saint Augustine. In the space of a few years the number of his disciples increased so considerably, that he divided them into eight abbeys, which all became famous. Several other cities also humbly begged the holy founder to erect in their midst dwellings for his religious. Among these was the celebrated city of Antwerp, where Tanchelin had seduced many inhabitants with his heresy. This arch-heretic had almost entirely set aside the partaking of the holy Eucharist, because he denied the real presence of Christ, and had in its place led many to an impious life by his wicked teachings. No sooner had St. Norbert arrived at Antwerp than he refuted the heretic Tanchelin in a public discourse, to the great humiliation of the latter, and in a short time brought the poor deluded inhabitants back again into the pale of the true Church. In his sermons, he exhorted all to pay greater honor to the holy Eucharist and more frequently to receive it. The Canons of the Church of St. Michael offered the Saint this Church and also some houses for dwelling places, and requested him most earnestly to leave some of his religious there, that the people of the city might be kept on the path of righteousness; to which St. Norbert acceded.

Not long afterwards, when the Saint returned from Rome, whither he had gone to obtain the confirmation of his Order, he met the Emperor and many senators at Spire. At the same time there came some deputies from Magdeburg, who announced the death of their bishop, and desired a successor. The Emperor, who highly esteemed the Saint on account of his virtues and the miracles he wrought, would appoint no other than him. The Saint used all possible means to decline so high a dignity, but was obliged to accept it, and being received in Magdeburg with great rejoicings, he was consecrated bishop. Although now occupying so elevated a position, he changed nothing in his exterior, but led the same poor, humble and austere life. He labored earnestly to reform the abuses and vices that had crept in among the clergy as well as the laity, and at first excited against himself

the hatred of wicked people, who conspired to kill him. An assassin whom they had hired for this purpose, went on Maunday-Thursday, to the palace of the bishop, under the pretext of wishing to confess, but keeping a dagger concealed, with which he intended to kill the Saint. Norbert, knowing by divine revelation, his wicked design, asked him what he wished, and the unhappy man, sinking tremblingly at his feet, confessed his intention and begged to be forgiven. For a long time accustomed not only to pardon his enemies, but to return benefits for their misdeeds, the Saint hesitated not kindly to accept the man's repentance.

Many other brilliant examples of virtue are to be found in the history of his life, but space is wanting to report them all here. To sum it up in a few words, Saint Norbert was the Apostle of his time, a man standing high in the grace of the Almighty, who had abundantly bestowed upon him all apostolic gifts. Four months before his last hour, God sent him a severe sickness, which ended with his happy death, in the year 1134. This Saint is represented as holding in his right hand a monstrance, in his left his Archbishop's staff and an olive branch. The first is a symbol of his defence of the real presence of Christ in the holy Eucharist, and of his zeal in leading the faithful to the adoration and frequent reception of the holy Sacrament. The second signifies his dignity as Archbishop, a dignity to which the Almighty had raised him against all his expectations, and it is also an emblem of the victory which he won over the world, the flesh and Satan. It is especially related in the history of his life that at his death several pious persons saw him ascend toward heaven with an olive branch in his hand.

The Almighty, who often honors in this world those who endeavor to glorify His name, made St. Norbert greatly famed through the whole Christian world, by the many and most wonderful miracles wrought at his intercession.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Norbert defended the real presence of Christ in the holy Eucharist, and exhorted the people to pay greater honors to the divine mystery and to receive it more frequently. You, without doubt, believe all that the true Church teaches of this sacrament. But do you honor it duly and receive it frequently? How do you conduct yourself in the church where it is kept? Can one conclude from your behavior that you believe in your heart what your lips profess? I cannot: for when I perceive that you are too indolent to bend your knees before the Blessed Sacrament, that you cast your eyes hither and thither, talk, laugh and jest. I must suppose that you do not really believe

in the presence of Jesus Christ, your Saviour and Judge; or I must think that your deeds belie your words. Of the faith of the devils St. James says: "The devils believe and tremble" (James ii.). Is it possible that you do not fear and tremble in the presence of your God and Judge? Must not one conclude from it, that your faith is worse than that of the devils? And what have you to say in regard to your receiving the blessed Sacrament? How often does it take place? With how much devotion? What is your preparation for it? How long and in what state of mind do you prepare for it? How long does your thanksgiving after Communion last? Examine carefully your conscience, and resolve to do better in all those points in which you find yourself deficient.

II. "Flee from evil and do good." Thus spoke the voice from above in answer to Norbert's question: "Lord, what dost thou wish me to do?" To this voice, Norbert yielded obedience until the end of his life, and went thus into the home of a happy eternity in heaven. Eternal are the joys, eternal are the honors and possessions of the inhabitants of heaven. They never end, but endure to all eternity. Oh! how great must be the happiness, to dwell forever in heaven! A Saint is free from all pain forever, from all sorrow, all fear, all anxiety! A Saint has an everlasting abundance of all imaginable and more than

imaginable joys. A Saint enjoys the society of other Saints, nay even the sight of God Himself, and all this without end. He is happy for evermore, ceaselessly happy! How different is the happiness of the happiest man in this world! It is short, uncertain, never unalloyed, always accompanied by fear or grief and soon passes away. On the contrary, the bliss of heaven is certain, perfect, free from all sadness or fear and is everlasting, unending. As many years will pass as there are grains of sand on the sea-shore, atoms of dust in the air, drops of water in the ocean, and yet the happiness of a Saint will not be ended, it will be still as great as when he first entered heaven. But for whom is such a happy eternity prepared in heaven? For you, my reader, for myself, for all human beings; for, we are all created to go to heaven. Those who do not go thither will not have fulfilled God's commandments. What are His commandments? Read what the voice from heaven said to Norbert: "Turn from evil and do good." Obey this voice and you will surely go into eternal bliss. Or tell me, does God ask too much for a happy eternity? "No work which repays us with everlasting glory ought to be too hard for us, no time ought to seem too long," says St. Jerome. What then will you do? Oh! turn from evil and do good.

SEVENTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. PAUL, BISHOP AND MARTYR.

The Roman Martyrology commemorates to-day, the holy Bishop and martyr Paul, who is celebrated on account of his great labors and sufferings in defence of the truth, after the example of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, whose name he bore.

He was born at Thessalonica, in Macedonia, at the beginning of the fourth century. After he had been well instructed in profane and divine science, he went to Constantinople at the time of the holy patriarch Metrophanes. There he lived in such a manner, that he was admired for his great intelligence, eloquence and virtues. Metrophanes received him among the number of his religious, and sent him with the priest Alexander as secretary to Nice, to the celebrated first general Council. At that period he showed himself already as a brave defender of the Catholic faith against the Arians, who were very powerful, and whose hatred he thereby drew upon himself. When Alexander had become Bishop, or rather patriarch of Constantinople, he ordained Paul priest and ordered him to preach the Gospel. St Paul discharged this important office with so much zeal and fervor, that the Catholics were strengthened in their faith and encouraged in the exercise of virtue, and the Arians were everywhere defeated. Alexander rejoiced greatly at Paul's success, and when he became dangerously ill, he summoned the clergy to his side, and represented to them that no one was better fitted to succeed him than Paul, of whose virtue, wisdom and zeal they had so many proofs: but left however, as was just, the choice to them. The clergy were of the same opinion as the holy patriarch, and elected Paul as his successor, although they were violently opposed by the Arians.

Macedonius, at that time an Arian, but later the founder of a new heresy, and Eusebius, also an Arian, who both desired the see for themselves, invented all possible accusations against the new patriarch, spread them abroad everywhere, and calumniated the holy man to high and low. The influence of the wicked Eusebius at the court of the Emperor Constantine was very great. Hence it came at last so far, that the Emperor, although otherwise pious, became incited against Paul by these repeated complaints and banished him to Pontus, at the same time that the holy Bishop Athanasius was driven from his see and sent into exile by the Arians. After the death of the Emperor, however, the holy patriarch returned to his see and was received with great rejoicing by the Catholics. They led him in triumph, with exclamations of great joy to his throne, whence he, as a good shepherd, greeted his beloved flock in a short address, admonishing them to renewed fervor in the service of the Almighty. After this he began to discharge his functions as he had formerly done. What all most admired in him was that he never complained of the great wrong that had been done him. He knew who were the instigators and authors of the calumnies that were circulated about him, and also had opportunities and power to

punish them as they deserved ; but he made no use of the occasion and treated his slanderers as if they had done him no harm. So brilliant an example of Christian patience and kindness not only strengthened the Catholics in their devotion to the holy bishop, but even won him the hearts of many Arians. St. Paul consequently was able to administer in great peace his priestly functions. This peace, however, did not last long. Eusebius, the Arian bishop of Nicomedia, had mighty protectors at the court of the new emperor Constantius, who greatly favored the Arians. Hence they so thoroughly won the Emperor by their cunning and wickedness, that a council of Arian bishops-deposed St. Paul from his see, and placed Eusebius in it. The holy man, who was not even listened to when he endeavored to free himself from the unjust charges brought against him, bore this bitter shame with gentleness and patience. But perceiving that at Constantinople he could neither be useful to the Christians, nor even live in safety, he determined to set out for those states which were under the government of Constans, a brother of Constantius. Hence he went to Triers, where St. Athanasius also had found an asylum, with other bishops driven from their sees by the Arians. The Emperor Constans promised him his protection, besides a powerful recommendation to the Emperor at Constantinople. The innocently banished bishop repaired some time later to Rome, whither St. Athanasius and other bishops had preceded him. The Pope called a council to investigate the accusations made against the Saint, and being convinced of his innocence, sent him back to Constantinople and commanded both clergy and laity to acknowledge and receive him as their lawful bishop. Eusebius, the usurper of the Episcopal chair had just died, so that St. Paul took possession of his see without opposition. The joy of the Catholics at his second return was still greater than at his first ; and in proportion was the bitterness of the Arians against him. Macedonius declared himself their friend and adherent, was installed by them and declared himself patriarch of Constantinople. The Catholics, not willing to see their lawful bishop again banished, rebelled and took up arms. The Saint endeavored to quiet the rebellion, but was unable to succeed. The Emperor Constantius, who resided at that period at Antioch, sent his general, Hermogenes, to Constantinople, and as he lost his life in the revolt, the emperor himself hastened to the city. All his wrath exploded upon the head of the holy bishop, whom he drove most ignominiously out of the city, under the pretext that he was the cause of the sedition. The Catholics would not consent to another banishment of their bishop, and guarding all the gates of the city, declared that they would much rather lose their lives than

their beloved pastor. The holy man, fearing, not without cause, that the Emperor would most cruelly revenge himself on the people, let himself down over the wall of the city during the night in a basket,—as centuries before St. Paul had done,—and thus fled secretly to Thessalonica, his home. When the escape of the bishop became known in the city, the Catholics manifested great consternation and sadness. Those who had influence at court, asked fearlessly of the Emperor to restore him. The Emperor Constans requested his brother Constantius to recall the Saint. Constantius, fearing an insurrection of the whole country, at length consented, but gave at the same time to the Arians full liberty to persecute the bishop in every possible way. The heretics made good use of this permission, and words fail to describe how much the holy man suffered from them, although Macedonius, the usurper of the patriarchal chair, was removed by the council of Sardica, and St. Paul again installed in his see. During six years the persecution of the bishop continued, when his most powerful protector, the good Catholic Emperor Constans, died. The heretics no sooner heard this news, than they requested the Arian Emperor Constantius again to remove and banish the bishop. Constantius hesitated not to fulfil their desire, took the Saint prisoner, and had him brought, heavily chained, to Singara in Mesopotamia. Thence they transported him to Emesa, in Syria, and again to Cucusus, a village situated in the wilderness of Mount Taurus. But the hatred of the Arians was not yet appeased. No sooner had the holy man arrived at Cucusus, than they cast him into a dark and filthy dungeon, without allowing him any nourishment, in order that he might starve. When, after six days, they found him still alive, they cruelly strangled him, thus doing away with their greatest enemy, as they called him. In spite of all their hatred of the Saint, they several times expressed their astonishment that not a single word of complaint against God or man had ever passed his lips, either in persecution, disgrace, banishment, imprisonment; nor even when they so brutally deprived him of life. He was always cheerful, calm, and undaunted in his confession of the Catholic faith. His holy body was at first buried at the place of his exile; later, however, transported to Ancyra, and in 381 it was brought with great solemnity to Constantinople, by command of the Emperor Theodosius.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Paul is falsely accused of the most horrid vices, is four times driven from his see into exile, load-	ed with chains, cast into a dungeon, famished and at last cruelly strangled. All this he suffers with ad-
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mirable fortitude and indomitable patience, without a word of complaint against God or men. Many persons have much to suffer; some innocently, others in consequence of their faults. But how do they suffer, and in what manner ends their suffering? St. Augustine, while contemplating the three crucifixes on Mount Calvary, writes as follows: "There were three crosses in one place: on one hung a murderer who went into heaven: on another, a murderer who went into hell; and, in the midst of them, Christ, who saved the one and condemned the other. The crosses are alike, but not those hanging on them. Christ suffers innocently, and after such suffering follows eternal glory. The murderer at his right suffers for the wrong he has done, and after such suffering he obtains grace and pardon. The murderer at his left, suffers also on account of his sin, but damnation is his lot after suffering." The same thing happens at the present day. Many suffer the same crosses, but they suffer not in the same manner: and therefore end their suffering differently. The end is not the same, because the manner in which they suffered was not the same. If you, like St. Paul, suffer after the example of Christ, innocently, and with fortitude and patience, the end of your suffering will be eternal life. If you suffer in consequence of your sin, but, imitating the penitent murderer, in the spirit of penance, you will partake of the happiness of paradise. But if you suffer, like the murderer at the left of the Saviour, without remorse for your evil deeds, your suffering will end with eternal damnation. How has your suffering been until now, and how will you suffer in future?

II. The persecution of St. Paul lasted six years, ending with his glorious martyrdom. Just so has

it been or will it be with the suffering of thousands. It has ended or will most assuredly end. But how is it with the suffering of a lost soul? Does it also end after six or sixty years? Oh! not even after six hundred, six thousand, or sixty millions of years! Never, never will it end. It will last as long as God lives: it will last eternally. The torments of a damned soul are to be suffered always: they are unending, eternal. As there is an eternity in heaven, just so there is an eternity in hell. Eternal truth has revealed both. Whoever doubts it will be convinced of it to his own ruin. A damned soul is deprived of heaven for always, eternally. It is cast into hell for everlasting. It has to suffer the horrible darkness of the abode of Satan, cruel hunger, torturing thirst; and all this for evermore. It is tormented eternally by the fire of hell. "The fire is not extinguished" says Christ (Mark ix.). It is ceaselessly tortured by the gnawing worm of a reproaching conscience. "Their worm dies not," says Christ also. A damned soul has continually to suffer all possible pains and torments, without having one moment of rest or peace. "Neither have they rest day nor night" (Apoc. xiv.). After having been in hell as many years as there are leaves on the trees, blades of grass in the fields, motes in the sun-beams, yet the suffering of the damned will not cease nor will there be any hope of release. Death, which on earth ends all suffering, is unknown in hell. "Men shall seek death and shall not find it: and they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them" (Apoc. ix.). There they will suffer without end. Who can listen to those divine truths without—if in sin—trembling with fear? Who will participate in such a dreadful eternity? The fire of hell is prepared accord-

<p>ing to Christ, for the devil and the angels, his followers. Why? On account of the sin they have committed. And thus will eternal fire be the lot of those who follow the devil, who commit mortal sin and die in it. Is it possible that you can believe this and dare to sin?</p>	<p>Oh! blindness! Oh! wickedness! Oh! presumption! "They are a nation without counsel and without wisdom. Oh, that they would be wise and would understand and would provide for their last end!" (Deut. xxxii.)</p>
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EIGHTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. MEDARD, BISHOP OF NOYON AND TOURNAV, AND ST. CLAUDIUS,
ARCHBISHOP OF BESANCON.

St. Medard, one of the most excellent bishops of France, was a native of Salancy, in the county of Vermandois. His parents were wealthy nobles, who took great pains to have their son well instructed not only in the Christian faith, but also in the liberal arts. Medard showed, from his childhood, a most tender and generous heart towards the poor and needy. To a blind man who, clad in rags, met him one day, he gave his own coat, which on that day he wore for the first time. To a stranger who had been robbed of his horse on the road, he gave another out of his father's stables. When the servants apprised the latter of what had been done, Medard confessed it, adding that God would not let him suffer for what he, for Christ's sake, had given to the poor. When his father inspected the stables, these words had come true; for he found the number of horses complete, and in place of the one Medard had given away, there was a much better one, and nobody knew how it had come into the stable. As he became older, Medard was given in charge of the bishop of Vermandois, who, esteeming him highly on account of his many qualities of heart and mind, received him among the clergy of his diocese. In this station he was a bright example to all, and so devoted to prayer, so zealous in the study of Holy Writ, and so austere to himself, that the bishop soon ordained him priest and charged him to preach the Gospel. For many years he administered these apostolic duties with unwearied fervor and indescribable benefit to others. It was observed that God not only visibly protected his faithful servant in all he undertook, but also honored him with the gift of miracles, which contributed much to his popularity. A thief one night went into the vineyard of the Saint, and having gathered as many grapes as he was able to carry, he

wickedly injured the vines ; but on trying to leave, he was unable to find the way out, and was compelled to remain there until day, when he was found, and brought, covered with shame and confusion, before Medard ; the latter, having kindly admonished him, forgave him, and made him a present of the grapes he had gathered. Another, who had taken the honey and wax out of the Saint's hives, was pursued by the bees so long that he returned and begged the Saint's pardon. Medard having admonished him, made the sign of the cross, when the bees ceased to torment him and went back to their hives. At another time, a thief dared to drive off an ox, which carried a bell round its neck. The man filled the bell with grass in order not to be traced by its ringing. When he had arrived at a place where he supposed himself safe, the bell began to ring, and the thief tried in vain to stop it. Hence he had to restore the animal to its rightful proprietor. These are a few examples of the watchful care God bestowed upon his servant. A great many more might be related of his miraculously healing the sick and delivering the possessed. St. Medard had only to make the sign of the cross over the sick and possessed, and sickness and evil spirits fled. The high esteem which the Saint enjoyed on account of these events, and still more by his holy life, was effectually manifested at the death of the bishop : the whole people would have no one for his successor except their miraculous apostolic priest. As earnest as the humble servant of God had been in protesting against his elevation, so zealous was he in fulfilling his duties to the flock entrusted to his care when once he became convinced that it was the will of the Almighty which had called him. He changed nothing in his mode of living ; sought neither rest nor pleasure, but redoubled his care for the salvation of souls. He travelled through cities and villages ; preached, instructed, admonished, in short, left nothing undone that could be expected of a true bishop and pastor. He had much to suffer from the invasion of the Huns and other savage nations, who cruelly devastated the land. He therefore transferred his Episcopal seat to Noyon, as it was better fortified than Vermand. Just at that time died Eleutherius, bishop of Tournay, who had foretold to Medard, when the latter was but a youth, the ecclesiastical dignity to which he had attained. The fame of the excellent administration of Medard, which had spread abroad, induced the clergy as well as the other inhabitants of the city, with the consent of King Clotaire, to offer to Medard the government of that see also. How much the bishop was opposed to this plan may easily be supposed. Yet, as St. Remigius, archbishop at Rheims, with others, represented to Pope Hormisdas the important reasons, which made this desirable, Medard received from

Rome the order to take the government of that see. Although the Saint was at that period already advanced in years and enfeebled by incessant labor, he obeyed and accepted this augmentation of his work. In this latter diocese, there were still many idolaters, who harassed him in every possible manner, and who once even dragged him to the place of execution, intending to sacrifice him to their gods. The bishop, however, could not be intimidated, and at last won the hearts of all so completely by his invincible patience and gentleness, as well as by his pious endeavors, that they voluntarily submitted to the sweet yoke of the Saviour.

After this happy result, he returned to Noyon, where he became dangerously ill. It was edifying to observe how the holy man encouraged himself in his pains, by meditation on eternal truths. Clotaire, the King, visited him and asked for his last blessing. The inhabitants of both Sees prayed with many tears to the Almighty, to prolong the days of their holy shepherd. But the time had come when the faithful and indefatigable servant of God was to receive his eternal recompense, which was awarded to him after a happy death, in 561. His soul was seen ascending to heaven in the form of a white dove.



To the life of St. Medard we will add a short sketch of the biography of the holy bishop Claude, who was a descendant of the Counts Palatine of Burgundy. His parents, who were not less pious than noble, had carefully educated him at home until he had reached his seventh year, when they gave him, for his further instruction and for the study of the liberal arts, to some learned men. Claude was zealous in his studies, but still more so in devotional exercises and the practice of good works. He went daily to church, was present at Holy Mass and other sacred offices; listened joyfully to the word of God; loved the society of the religious and other devout persons, but despised the company of the frivolous. He was never seen in the dance, at theatres or other nightly amusements. None could find anything to blame, either in his conduct, words or deeds. In this manner, he continued his life until his twentieth year, when he became a Canon in the Cathedral of Besançon, and was at the same time ordered to expound Holy Writ, as he was particularly well-versed in the science of theology. This function he fulfilled with unabated energy and great ability, but was nevertheless daily in the choir to chant the offices and assist at Holy Mass. The time left to him from his labors was occupied in prayer and devout reading; and he conducted himself in everything in so

edifying a manner, that he became a model to the whole clergy. When Claude had lived for twelve years in this manner, the archbishop of the city became ill. Claude soon perceived that he was already thought of as successor to the See; and as he, out of humility, endeavored to avoid all high offices, he obtained permission to leave the city for some time. He went to an estate of his at some distance from the city, and there devoted his time to pious exercises. But when he least expected it, deputies arrived who announced to him that he had been chosen unanimously as successor of the late archbishop; and notwithstanding his objections, he was obliged to obey.

Scarcely had he been consecrated bishop when all the virtues of his high calling were seen brightly shining in him. He travelled through his entire diocese, preached wherever he went, reformed abuses, and endeavored to introduce everywhere, among the people, a truly Christian life. All those in his charge had free access to him, he listened to them with patience, and nobody left him without being comforted. Most admirable was his unalterable kindness to all, and the Christian gentleness with which he met every one. Even when punishing great faults, and when suffering intense wrong, an impatient word, or an expression not in accordance with his exalted station, was never heard to pass his lips. His whole life and action were such that they might serve all bishops and ecclesiastical superiors as the most perfect model. But as nevertheless the holy man desired to serve God more perfectly and more peacefully, he resigned his episcopal dignity, after seven years, left all temporal goods and went into a monastery, where he resolved to end his days in voluntary poverty and in submission to his superior. After living there five years in great austerity and holiness, the Abbot died, and he was elected his successor. St. Claude, who desired to live quietly and under obedience, was not rejoiced at his election, but hoping to do much good to the glory and honor of the Almighty, he submitted. How perfectly he exercised his duties as Abbot, how he led those under him to virtue and sanctity by precept and by example, cannot be related in a few words. The fame of his holy life drew to his monastery many noble young men, who desired to walk in the path of perfection under the direction of such a bright example of Christian virtues. All those under him loved him as their father; for, they saw that, with a father's care, he was truly solicitous for their temporal and spiritual welfare. Hence their sorrow was inexpressibly great when death took him out of their midst. The holy Abbot had arrived at a great age, when what seemed to all a slight sickness befell him. He, however, felt that his end was drawing near, and calling all his religious to him, he

bade them farewell. The following day, according to his wish, he was carried into the Church, where he received the last Sacraments, shedding a flood of tears. Having been brought back to his cell, he dismissed his religious, desiring to be alone, in order to pray more quietly. While praying, he died. They found him kneeling at his desk with folded hands, and his eyes lifted towards heaven. His holy body has remained incorrupt until this hour.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Medard encouraged himself during his illness by meditating on eternal things. There is nothing which gives us such endurance in sickness, persecution, crosses and trials as the remembrance of those truths which our holy faith teaches us. Some of them I will mention in a few words, as I have already spoken more in detail of them elsewhere. The first truth is: "All I suffer is sent and comes from God. He has permitted that it should be so, or has Himself so ordered it. It is His will that I should suffer." The second: "My suffering is either of short duration or not of great consequence. If it is of no consequence, I have no right to complain. Should it seem ever so long, it will end at last. Thousands of others have suffered much more and much longer." The third: "I have deserved my suffering; yes, I have deserved much more." The fourth: "My suffering is not yet hell: it is trifling, nothing in comparison with the pains of the eternal fire." The fifth: "All I suffer is very little compared with the reward God promises, if, in obedience to His holy will, I bear it patiently." The sixth: "The amount of my suffering is very small compared with what the saints endured to inherit heaven; or compared with what thousands have to suffer in our days." The seventh: "My suffering is a trifle or as nothing compar-

ed with what my Saviour suffered out of love for me." The eighth: "To suffer patiently is the way to heaven. To suffer impatiently or unwillingly, is the road which leads many to hell."

I have here given you eight important truths, each one of which taken to heart will cheer and comfort you in your sorrows and shield you against impatience.

II. The holy bishops Claude and Medard, besides other virtues, particularly practised humility and gentleness as we see in their lives. It is the duty of every Christian to practise these two virtues. Christ our Lord required it of us, saying: "Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls (Matt. ii.). Of Christ, the Saviour, we shall learn these virtues. He has taught them by words and deeds. By his example must we practise them, and endeavor to become meek and humble, as he was. Consider the whole life of Christ, from the beginning to the end, and you will find it a constant practice of these two virtues. The two holy bishops learned from the Saviour these virtues and practised them in their station after His example. What have you done until now? Have you even done so much as earnestly to think of practising them? Oh! those rough, bitter, unkind, impatient words, with which you often meet your neighbor,

are surely no sign of Christian meekness. Refrain, in future, at least from these, and make use of calm and kind words, of such expressions as you wish others to use towards you. If you practise Christian humility as you ought to do, you will not raise yourself above others: should you occupy an elevated station, be not therefore proud; do not despise those who are below you in rank: seek not empty praises: show yourself friendly, polite and kind to others: grieve not and be not angry if others esteem you

little or even despise you. These and similar practices of humility will make you agreeable to God and men. Remarkable are the words of the pious Judith: "The prayer of the humble and meek hath always pleased Thee." (Judith. ix.). Full of comfort are the promises of the wise man: "Be humble in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God;" (Ecc. iii.) and those of the Psalmist: "And He will exalt the meek unto salvation:" which means, unto everlasting life.

NINTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. PRIMUS AND ST. FELICIANUS, MARTYRS.

Primus and Felicianus, two holy martyrs, were brothers and natives of Rome. They were renowned on account of their birth and wealth, but still more on account of the blameless life they led and their determination to remain constant in the true faith, though they knew the suffering which was in store for them as well from their pagan parents, as from other persecutors of the Christian faith. At that period the emperors Dioclesian and Maximian reigned, and the Christians were most cruelly persecuted. Many of them were cast into prison, while others were put to death by the most barbarous torments. The two zealous brothers visited the imprisoned Christians frequently, and sacrificed all their possessions to comfort them, while they cheered and encouraged those that were led to execution, exhorting them to remain faithful to Christ. The idolatrous priests could not endure this, and incited the people against the two holy brothers, as against two sworn enemies of the gods, and accused them before the Emperor, demanding their execution.

Both were brought before the Emperor and called upon to renounce their faith: they, however, said fearlessly, that they would rather die, than obey the Emperor in this point. They were cast into a dungeon and heavily chained. But in the first night an angel appeared to them, who loosed their fetters and set them free. They immediately returned to their former kind deeds, not willing to save their lives by flight, as many advised them to do. The Emperor, being informed of this, summoned them into

his presence, and endeavored more than before, by promises and menaces to persuade them to abjure their faith, and at last sent them to the temple of Hercules to offer incense to this idol. Both brothers refused to obey, and the Emperor gave orders that after having been scourged, they should be taken to the Governor of Nomentum, a village about 12 miles from Rome, and very hostile to the Christians. Before they were led thither, an angel again appeared and healed their wounds. No sooner had the two Christian heroes appeared before Promotus, the cruel Governor of the town, than he ordered them to be beaten with clubs until they should change their minds. This was a punishment ordained by law only for slaves and other low people, and the tyrant had it executed upon the two noble brothers in derision of their faith. It was a most painful punishment as the clubs were scourges twisted together of many cords, with leaden balls fastened at the end. With these the condemned were whipped on the bare back and neck. The two holy brothers had to endure this martyrdom, and were more cruelly whipped than the greatest criminals. They, however, manifested no sign of pain, but encouraging each other, they united in praising God, humbly begging His assistance: "Strengthen us, O God!" cried they; "be with us O God! Our only hope, strengthen us, that all may recognize Thee as the only true God." The torture was prolonged until the executioners, tired out with whipping, were no longer able to torment the Saints.

The Governor wondered at the constancy, or, as he said, the obstinacy of the two brothers, and to cause them sooner to obey him, he separated them and had them confined in different prisons. A few days later, he had Felicianus alone brought before him, to whom he said: "Is it not a contemptible blindness that you should persist in ending your days in agony," (Felicianus was 80 years old) "when, by obeying the Emperor, you have the opportunity of closing your life honored and favored by him?" The Saint replied: "Is it not a much more contemptible blindness that you, a man of so much mind and importance, should worship a piece of wood as God, and thus cast yourself, after the few short days of life, into never-ending pains and torments, while you have the opportunity, by receiving the true faith, to make yourself eternally happy with the true God?" These fearless words enraged the Governor beyond endurance, and he ordered the Saint to be fastened to a pole by an iron nail, and there to be left hanging. The Saint, casting his eyes towards heaven, said: "I have placed my trust in God; I shall not fear the hand of man." Three days the hero had to remain on the pole, after which he was taken back to prison. Meanwhile Promotus had Primus

brought before him and said to him that at last the eyes of his brother Felicianus had been opened, and that he had sacrificed to Jupiter, for which reason the Emperor had raised him to the highest dignities, and that Primus might expect the same favors if he followed his brother's example. But Primus knew the constancy of his brother, as an angel had revealed it to him. Hence he reproved Promotus with earnest words. Enraged at this, the governor said: "Either you will immediately sacrifice to Jupiter, or I shall deal with you more cruelly than with all the others." "I sacrifice to the true God only," replied Primus, "and fear not your cruelties." Hardly had these words passed his lips, when the tyrant gave orders to scourge him with hard thongs, until his whole body was one great wound. After this they burned him for a long time with torches. Primus's countenance was bright and cheerful during this inhuman torture. To prevent this, by command of the tyrant, they poured melted lead into his mouth. How terrible must have been this suffering is easily to be conceived. Constantine the Great had ordered this kind of punishment for those who by impure language had seduced others to unchastity. "Whoever with impure speeches seduces any one to unchastity," says the law, "shall have his mouth closed with melted lead." The tyrants had already in earlier times used this punishment to torture the Christians. St. Primus was sentenced to this suffering in order that he might no longer praise the true God. He, however, swallowed the lead without the least sign of pain, and then turning to Promotus, said: "Acknowledge at length, unhappy man, the omnipotence of my God, and be converted to Him that you may not go to eternal damnation." Promotus, furious and unwilling to hear more, ordered the brothers to be cast to the wild beasts. The order was obeyed, but neither the fiercely roaring lion, nor the cruel bear, which they let loose upon them, harmed either of them, but crouching at their feet, thus evinced their reverence for the holy men. Many of the heathens, who witnessed this spectacle, were so deeply touched by the miracle, that they cried: "Great is the God of the Christians, and He alone is the true God!" Promotus, fearing an insurrection, had both the valiant confessors decapitated without loss of time; and thus they both, after many heroic battles, obtained the crown of immortality in heaven, in the year of our Lord 287.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Primus and Felicianus, the two holy brothers, encouraged each other to patience and constancy during their martyrdom. Thus one helped	the other to gain heaven. Both manifested by this not only a truly Christian love to each other, but also a true love to God. Have you
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no sisters, no brothers, no friends or relatives, to whom you may sometimes say an encouraging word or whom you may exhort to piety? If not, then you have as many sisters and brothers in Christ as there are Christians. Among these there are surely some whom you can assist to gain heaven by encouraging them to lead a Christian life: by impressing upon them the duty of abstaining from lying, cursing, slander and other vices; by exhorting them to pray, to assist at Holy Mass, to hear the word of God, to give alms, to go to confession and to do other good works. Endeavor to do this. In this manner you manifest true love to God and to your neighbor: to your neighbor, because you assist him to eternal happiness; and to God, because, according to St. Chrysostom, you can do nothing more agreeable to God than to gain others to His service, and deter them from offending His majesty. "If you love God, writes St. Augustine, endeavor to induce those, who live in your house or with whom you are acquainted, to love Him also. Exhort them, beg them, persuade them as much as is in your power." If you do this, you may rest assured that God will richly recompense you and they whom you will thus lead to heaven, will thank you in the other world. If, however, you dare to deter any one from doing good or perhaps even entice him to evil, you assist him to enter hell, and the Almighty will terribly punish your wickedness. And they whom you have led to hell, will during all eternity, as I told you last month, curse and execrate you: yes they will war and rage against you more than the evil spirits.

II. St. Felicianus considered it

contemptible blindness that the heathen governor, by the idolatry of a few days, should cast himself into eternal torments, when he had the opportunity, by receiving the true faith, to prepare himself for a happy eternity with the true God. Heaven and hell are open to you, my reader! There is eternity in heaven: there is also eternity in hell. But heaven can also be for ever closed to you and you may be cast into Hell. "God sets water and fire before thee. Stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt. Before man are life and death, good and evil: that which he shall choose shall be given him." (Eccl. xv.) Thus speaks the Lord Himself. He gives grace, opportunity, and means to you to escape hell and gain heaven. Is it not then the most contemptible blindness, the most astonishing folly, if you do not use these gifts to secure your salvation, but, on account of frivolous pleasures, or temporal advantages, close heaven for ever against yourself, and cast yourself into hell, when you could have made yourself eternally happy? "Understand, ye senseless among the people: and you, fools, be wise at last." (Psalm 93.) A fool, and a great fool is he, who believes in heaven, believes that he can take possession of it, and yet does not earnestly strive to obtain it. A still greater fool, however, is he who believes that there is a hell and that he is in danger of falling into it, and yet does not use all his strength to avoid it. "If we believe in hell," says St. Peter Chrysologus, "an eternally tormenting hell, why do we not endeavor to escape it; why do we not prevent being sentenced to such dreadful and eternal suffering?"

TENTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. MARGARET, QUEEN OF SCOTLAND.

St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland, was descended by her father's side from royal, by her mother's side from imperial blood. She was born in Hungary at the time of the holy king St. Stephen, at whose court her father Edward and her mother Agatha resided. Her after life proved how piously she had been educated. Edward was the rightful heir to the English crown, but the power of his enemies had deprived him of it. After his death, Agatha resolved to go to England with Prince Edgar and the two Princesses Margaret and Christine, as she had been made to hope that Edgar would be placed upon the throne. A heavy storm arose when they were at sea and drove their ship to Scotland. The reigning king Malcolm received and entertained them most kindly, and making the acquaintance of the beautiful and virtuous princess Margaret, he asked her hand in marriage. Agatha gladly consented, and Margaret was obedient to her mother's wishes. The wedding was celebrated, and Margaret, in the 24th year of her age, was crowned Queen of Scotland.

She reigned for 30 years, and became famed for her wisdom and piety. On the spot where she had been crowned, she had a magnificent church built in honor of the Holy Trinity, in order that her own and her husband's souls might not be lost, and in case she should have male heirs, she might have grace to educate them in such a manner that they would not sacrifice eternal for temporal goods. She also built or restored several other churches and monasteries, and provided them with all things necessary. She desired to have every article used in church most splendid, and was therefore constantly occupied with her maids of honor in working for the churches. Her conduct towards the king, her husband, was exemplary, and by it she caused him to lead a Christian life. She changed everything at the court in such a way, that her husband was royally served and was honored by his subjects with increased respect. She exhorted him particularly to be impartial in the administration of justice; to be kind and liberal to the poor; but above all, to be zealous for the true faith, and to uproot many abuses which had crept into his kingdom. Following her counsel, the king assembled the bishops and represented to them those abuses which he wished them to abolish; which was accordingly done. The Queen herself was a bright light of Christian virtues to all.

In the midst of regal splendor, she led a very austere life,

and was so assiduous in her prayers, that she gave to them even a part of the night. The reading of devout books was her greatest delight, and she led others to it also. To the word of God she listened with avidity and joy. She observed the prescribed fasts, and besides kept a strict abstinence of forty days before Christmas, even when she was sick. She evinced a more than motherly heart towards the poor and needy. Incredible is the amount of alms which she gave with her own hands to the poor, for whose benefit she founded many charitable institutions. She valued neither her own clothing nor her magnificent jewels where the poor were concerned. Almost daily did she wash the feet of some and provide them with money. Nine little orphans were at her court, to whom she often gave food with her own hands. Three hundred poor were daily fed in the royal hall, where she and the king frequently served them at table, and at times kissed their feet. The Almighty, who seldom fails to reward such deeds of kindness, even in this life, blessed the pious queen with many children, whom she most carefully educated. She was not content with merely giving them to the care of such as were famed for piety and learning, but she also taught them herself as well in reading and writing as in virtue and the fear of God. She reproved them for the smallest faults, and never allowed one to pass unpunished. One of the best admonitions which she gave them was as follows: "My children, love and fear God; for they who fear God, have not to fear death; and they who love God with their whole heart, will not only be happy for the short space of time we live on this earth, but will be eternally blessed in the life to come." She also taught them to behave most respectfully and reverentially in Church and was in this, as in all other things, a bright example to them. She would not suffer one to address a single unnecessary word to another in church: "For," said she, "the church is a place to pray and weep over our sins."

After the pious queen had for many years taken the utmost care of the education of her children, and great solicitude for the welfare of the land God revealed to her the day of her death. For nearly half a year she suffered from a very painful sickness, which she bore with perfect submission to the divine will, manifesting an invincible patience. Having cleansed her conscience by a general confession, she told her confessor that she would not live much longer, but that he would survive her some years.

She then requested him, first, that he would remember her in saying Mass as long as he lived; and secondly, that he would take all possible pains in the further instruction of her children. Four days before her death, the king was murdered, at the siege,

of the castle of Allwick. One of the royal Princes arrived to inform his mother of the sad news. She asked him, before he had time to speak, how her husband was, but he, seeing how ill she was, would have concealed the fact from her, fearing rightly that agitation and grief would shorten her days. She, however, said: "My son, I know the worst, but request you, by the love you owe me as your mother, to acquaint me with the whole occurrence." These words obliged the prince to speak. Having given her an account of the melancholy event, the Christian heroine raised her heart and eyes to heaven, and exclaimed: "I praise Thee and give thanks to Thee, O great God, that it has pleased Thee to send me this great cross before my end, in order that by patiently bearing it, I may pay the debt I still owe Thee on account of my sins." Soon after, she repeated the most fervent exercises of virtue, and said at last: "Jesus Christ! Thou who hast given life to the world by Thy death, release me from the bonds of the flesh and take my soul into everlasting joy." Having pronounced these words, she ended her holy life. Her face, which from austere fasting and long sickness, was emaciated and pale, shone, soon after her death, with a wonderful beauty. The many and great miracles which God wrought in favor of those who invoked the holy queen, prove how powerful is her intercession at the throne of the Almighty.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

What is related above contains something instructive for men of almost all classes and conditions. Persons of high rank may learn how to live piously in their station, and particularly how they may occupy their time and conduct themselves toward the poor. Married people may learn from it to incite each other to virtue, restrain each other from evil and live in constant love and harmony. It may further instruct parents how to educate their children, and what principles they ought to impress deeply into their hearts. All may learn from this holy queen reverence in Church, zeal in listening to the word of God, pleasure in reading devout books; heroic patience, complete resignation to the divine will; strict obser-

vance of the ordained fasts, and other similar virtues. Of all this I will take into consideration only two points.

I. Margaret, a queen, herself taught her children to read and write, instructed them in religion and Christian conduct, punished their faults, and instilled into their hearts most wholesome principles in regard to the fear and love of God, reverence in Church and similar virtues. All these are marks of a Christian solicitude for the welfare and salvation of her children. How will those parents, in whom not one of these signs is found, justify themselves before God? Many neither instruct their children in religion nor have them instructed by others, but are much more anxious that

they shall learn dancing, music, elegance of dress and manners, than their Catechism or the doctrines of their religion. They lead them rather to the theatre, or into society, than to Church or Holy Mass, to a sermon or to religious instruction. They give them a novel to read, rather than a devout book. Others again are too indulgent to their children, do not punish their faults, nor allow others to correct them. And why this? They say that they love their children too much, and that the little ones do not understand why they are punished. But how blind, how silly must they be to speak thus. Does a parent's love consist in not punishing a child deservedly or in indulging it in everything? The Holy Ghost teaches the contrary when he says: "He that spareth the rod hateth his Son: but he that loves him correcteth him betimes." (Prov. xiii.). Who is right, such parents or the Holy Ghost? "The children do not understand why they are punished," they say. I say, that through punishment they acquire the knowledge of right and wrong, learn what they are permitted to do and what not. If they are not punished, they become accustomed to do evil and continue in it without hesitation. Hence the Holy Ghost admonishes: "Withhold not correction from a child: for, if thou strike him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod and deliver his soul from hell" (Prov. xxiii.). Heed the last words and see the benefit which is derived from just punishment, while the omission of it often leads children to hell. Which way your duty lies is therefore easy to see. You will spare the rod, because it hurts the child; but have you considered that the child will one day burn in hell in consequence? I shall give, to conclude this lesson, a few verses of the book of Ecclesiasticus or

Sirach, which I desire all parents to read very carefully. "He that loveth his son, frequently chastiseth him, that he may rejoice in his latter end and not grope after the doors of his neighbor. He that instructeth his son, shall be praised in him, and shall glory in him, in the midst of them of his household. He that teacheth his son, maketh his enemy jealous and in the midst of his friends he shall glory in him.

. . . . A horse not broken becometh stubborn, and a child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way and he shall make thee afraid; play with him, and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him, lest thou have sorrow, and at last thy teeth be set on edge. Give him not liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn and regard thee not and so be a sorrow of heart to thee. Instruct thy son and labor about him, lest his lewd behaviour be an offence to thee." These are the lessons of the Holy Ghost; from which it is easily to be perceived how children ought to be instructed and corrected, and how unwisely and sinfully parents act who do not punish them.

II. The salvation of her own, her husband's and her children's souls was the heartfelt desire of this holy queen: for which purpose she built a magnificent church. Although you have built no churches, you go often to church to pray: you offer divers devotions, have masses said, confess and go to holy Communion and ask the Saints to intercede for you. But why do you do all this? What is your intention? Ah! generally only temporal things. You desire to be released from some cross; you ask for temporal benefits for yourself or yours. Hence spring all your thoughts, all your devotions.

Why do you not turn them before all things upon the salvation of your soul, or upon receiving spiritual graces or being relieved from spiritual evils? Why not pray that you may shun sin, do good, and be aided to fight valiantly against temptation? Why not that you may gain salvation, and not be eternally condemned? Consider these points more frequently, as they are of greater importance than all else that you could seek or ask. David prayed thus in his Psalms: for, he often begs God to forgive his sins, to aid him in temptation, to give him grace not to be eternally cast into hell, but to go into life everlasting. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy

great mercy; and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my iniquity. Wash me yet more from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Cast me not away from thy face. Punish me not in thy wrath. O Lord, hasten to help me." These are words of the Holy Psalmist, which all regard the salvation of the soul. He confessed it to himself, saying: "One thing have I asked of the Lord, this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life" (Psalm xxvi.). It was principally salvation for which he prayed; all his aspirations were directed towards it. Take my advice and follow the Psalmist.

ELEVENTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. BARNABAS, APOSTLE.

St. Barnabas, upon whom the Holy Church confers the title of Apostle, was born of the tribe of Levi, in the island of Cyprus. His parents, who were very wealthy, sent him to Jerusalem, that he might there be well instructed in the laws, by the celebrated Gamaliel, who had also been the teacher of Saul, afterwards St. Paul. From his youth he endeavored to lead an honest, quiet life; and avoiding idleness and frivolities, he found time and opportunity to acquire a thorough knowledge of the Mosaic law. As at that time all Jerusalem was full of astonishment at our Lord Jesus Christ, who had manifested so incontestibly his divine mission, it was not difficult for Barnabas to recognize in Him the true Messiah, who had been so frequently promised and predicted. Hence he went to Jesus, attended his sermons assiduously, and left him no more. The rich heritage bequeathed to him by his parents he sold, and gave the money to the poor. One acre of land he retained to meet his own necessities, but this he also sold after the ascension of our Lord, and laid the value received for it at the feet of the Apostles, as is related in the Acts, with the addition that he had formerly been called Joseph, but that the Apostles changed his name to Barnabas, which signifies, "Son of consolation."

So long as Christ lived, Barnabas was one of the seventy-two disciples who accompanied the Lord everywhere, and listened with avidity to his teaching. After the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Apostles made use of him as a zealous co-laborer in preaching the Gospel. When St. Paul, after his miraculous conversion, came to Jerusalem and desired to join the disciples of our Lord, they refused to trust him, fearing that he was not truly a confessor of Christ, as he had so cruelly persecuted the followers of the Gospel. St. Barnabas, who as said above, had studied the law under the same teacher with Paul, went therefore to him, to learn more of him. Being soon entirely convinced of his conversion, he brought him to the Apostles and acquainted them with the event which had thus changed Paul; whereupon they were greatly rejoiced, and no longer hesitated to give him their confidence. After this, the Apostles sent Barnabas to Antioch, there to plant the seeds of the Christian faith. He found many who had been converted to Christ. These he exhorted to remain constant to the true Church, while he persuaded others, who had obstinately remained in Judaism, to become followers of the Saviour. From Antioch he went to Tarsus to Paul. Accompanied by him he returned to Antioch, where both remained a year preaching the doctrine of Christ with such success, that those who became converted there, were the first who were called Christians, in order to confess openly to what faith they belonged. As zealous as these new Christians were in confessing the teachings of Christ, so were they charitable to the needy at Jerusalem, to whom they sent liberal contributions by Paul and Barnabas. Both Apostles returned from Jerusalem again to Antioch, and there, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they were sent by the Apostles to convert the Gentiles. Hence they repaired with another disciple of the Lord, named John Mark, to the City of Seleucia, and thence to the Island of Cyprus, where, on the Sabbath days, they preached in many cities the word of the Lord. Many Jews became converted; many, however, remained obdurate, and these calumniated the Apostles, who therefore said to them: "To you we had first to preach the word of God, but as you will not receive it, and deem yourselves not worthy of everlasting life, we shall turn to the heathens." They kept their word, and wandering through many heathen cities and places, they preached the Gospel and converted many. They had, however, much to suffer everywhere, as the Jews instigated the heathens against them.

After some years, both returned to Antioch, and as they found there some disturbance among the Christians on account of the belief which several of them entertained that they ought

to keep the old laws, particularly that of circumcision, Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to receive a decisive answer from the Apostles. Returning, they acquainted the Christians with what had been told to them and exhorted, them to live accordingly. It was in this city that St. Barnabas separated from St. Paul, and chose as his travelling companion, Mark, whom St. Paul would not keep longer with him because he had left him and Barnabas in Pamphilia. St. Paul took one of the most zealous disciples, named Silas, and went with him to Syria and Cilicia, while St. Barnabas, accompanied by Mark, left for Cyprus, and thence went to Rome. He went also to Milan, where he was the first to preach Christianity. There he remained seven years, and governed the newly-founded Church as its first bishop. After this he consecrated one of his disciples as his successor, and repaired to Bergamo and Brixen, where an altar is still shown, at which he said Holy Mass. At length he returned to Cyprus and gloriously ended his earthly career, as the Jews, who had come thither from Syria, had made a conspiracy to kill him. God revealed to him his approaching death, and the Saint, rejoicing at the tidings, assembled all the Christians, and after having said Mass, he gave them his last instructions, in which he encouraged them to constancy in the Christian faith, and exhorted them to lead an edifying life. After this he went fearlessly into the Synagogue and clearly proved to the Jews that Christ was the promised Messiah. Not able to refute his words, they attacked him with fearful rage, dragged him out of the Synagogue and stoned him. His holy body was buried by his disciple Mark. At his tomb God wrought at first numberless miracles on the possessed and sick, but as it happened that, on account of the persecutions which the Christians had to endure, it became forgotten and neglected, the Saint himself appeared to a bishop in Antioch, and made known where his remains lay buried. The holy body was then raised, with great solemnity. Upon the breast of the Saint was lying the Gospel of St. Matthew, which he had copied with his own hand. Particularly noteworthy in the life of this Saint is the fact, that during many years, he was the travelling companion of St. Paul, and had a share in all the labors, troubles and dangers which this holy Apostle suffered; also, that in Holy Writ he is called, "a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (Acts ii.).

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Barnabas rejoiced when God revealed his approaching death to him. The same sentiments are	found in the lives of many other Saints. They desired death, sighed after it, and when they saw it com-
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ing, they manifested great joy. There are also in our day persons who long for death, who desire it. But the cause of this is generally anger, impatience, trouble about work, long sickness, or great affliction. But these wishes, in such cases, are neither agreeable to God nor useful or wholesome to men; but are on the contrary detrimental. Quite different were the reasons for which the Saints longed for death and rejoiced at it; first, because God made men subject to the law of death, as a just punishment, to which we ought willingly to submit; secondly, because death frees man from numberless miseries of this life and brings him, if he is worthy, to his last end; thirdly, because death saves him from many dangers and occasions of sin, which might cause him to die in God's disgrace and consequently go into eternal punishment; fourthly, because only by death can we go into heaven, see God, and love and glorify him much more perfectly than we are able to do in this world. Consider all this thoroughly, and if it do not lead you to long for death after the examples of the Saints, it will at least help you to conquer your inordinate fear of death and make you willing to depart when your hour has come.

II. St. Barnabas was buried, according to his desire, with the Gospel lying on his breast, as a sign that he had loved and revered the precepts which it contains. Whoever loves and reveres Christ with his whole heart, must also love and revere the Gospel, because it contains the life and teachings of Christ. Whoever loves and reveres the Gos-

pel must love to read it, or hear it read and expounded, as is done in sermons. "We listen to the Gospel in the same manner," says St. Augustine, "as if Christ stood before us and spoke to us." The benefit that is derived from reading or hearing the word of God, St. Chrysostom explains in the following words: "Satan cannot easily find entrance into those who frequently read or hear the Gospel explained." How is it with you? Do you also duly love and esteem the Gospel and the teachings of Christ which it contains? Why do you not read it more frequently? Why are you not present more assiduously at the expounding of it? Do you expect to derive more benefit from the reading of those frivolous, unwholesome or sinful books which are so often seen in your hands? Do you think Satan will not easily find entrance into your heart on account of these books? Just the contrary: for, by reading licentious books, we open our heart to Satan and invite him to take possession of it, or at least to disturb it with all manner of dangerous thoughts. Acknowledge your fault while it is time. Keep the Gospel carefully and thoroughly, go frequently to hear explanations of it, as well as sermons, and then endeavor to form your life according to its precepts. "Our lives must harmonize with the Gospel," says St. Chrysostom. Read, therefore, the Gospel, listen to the explanation of it, and consider what is commanded you by Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lawgiver. In this manner alone will the Gospel benefit you; not otherwise.

TWELFTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. JOHN OF FACUNDO, CONFESSOR.

Pope Alexander VIII. canonized in 1690, with all the usual ceremonies, St. John of Facundo, to whom the Roman Martyrology gives the testimonial that he was a light of the Church by his faith, holiness of life and the many miracles he performed. He was born in the Kingdom of Leon, in Spain, in a small village called St. Facundo or Sahagun. His parents for many years had no issue; but after long prayers were at last blessed with John; hence they bestowed particular care in giving him a Christian education. He studied the liberal sciences in the monastery of St. Benedict, which was not far from his native place. In the course of time he came of the Court of the pious Bishop of Burgos, who, esteeming him highly on account of his virtues, ordained him priest. During his sojourn there he frequently visited a miraculous image of the crucified Saviour, which is preserved in the Church of the Augustinian Monks. One day he was there witness of the cure of a paralysed man, who, in gratitude for the benefit derived, and also to consecrate himself entirely to the service of God, joined the religious in whose Church the miracle had taken place. This event determined St. John to give himself also entirely to the service of the Almighty. Hence he left the court of the bishop and went to Salamanca, not only for the purpose of perfecting himself in theology, but also to lead a more perfect life.

After having made in both the desired progress, God called him by an interior voice to the office of preaching. John obeyed the call of God, and made a beginning in Salamanca, a city which was at that period in a most pitiful condition. Two young men of the nobility had, in a quarrel, killed two other noblemen. The mother of the two murdered youths, clad in the garb of a soldier, went with a few of her domestics after the assassins, who had immediately fled from the city. She found them in Portugal, and there killed them both; upon which a terrible feud broke out between the two families and all their respective connections. Some of the nobility took part with one of the families, some with the other. Drawing the other citizens into their quarrel, the whole city was soon divided into two parties. Both sides took up arms, and some of either were frequently wounded or killed. John was chosen by God to make peace between them. He often ventured into the midst of the combatants: spoke sometimes with kind, sometimes with severe words, and rested not until he had restored peace. Many prayers and penances he had offered to the Almighty for this end, had preached emphatically

in behalf of it, and several times had endangered his life, until he had accomplished his design.

After this he fell sick, and suffered greatly; and when the physician found it necessary that he should submit to a most painful and dangerous operation, he vowed that should the operation be successfully performed and his health be restored, he would enter a religious order. All went as he desired, and he hesitated not to enter, in pursuance of his vow, the order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine. How zealous he must have been during his novitiate may be concluded from the fact that he was soon after elected as Master of the Novices, and in the course of time he became Prior. He never left off preaching, for which God had not only bestowed upon him a peculiar talent: but also worked through him some very extraordinary conversions. Although the holy preacher was much persecuted on account of the impartiality with which he condemned vice, without respect of persons, he relaxed not in doing his duty. To a certain Duke who reproved his frankness with anger and menaces, he replied: "Your Grace must know that a preacher must have such a disposition that he should tell the truth even if it cost him his life." Several times were ruffians hired to waylay the Saint and to maltreat him, but God ordained that on the approach of their victim they could not move hand or foot until they had acknowledged their fault and begged his pardon.

This divine assistance, as well as the great success of his sermons, St. John obtained by his frequent and fervent prayers, to which he gave the greater part of the night; by his austerity in fasting and other work of penance, and by the great care he took to keep his conscience free from all stains of sin. Therefore he confessed almost daily, and when this was blamed, he said: "I am not sure of a day or an hour in which I may not be called to appear before the judgment-seat of God and give a rigorous account of my conduct. I often see that some die suddenly, while others lose their senses in sickness; hence, I endeavor to be always prepared. I confess frequently because I sin frequently." Thus spoke the humble servant of God, who never burdened his conscience with a mortal sin. To say holy Mass he prepared himself during whole hours, and scarcely ever said it without shedding many tears. He had often the grace to see visibly, while standing before the Altar, our Blessed Lord, the Virgin Mother and other Saints, and to receive from them the most beneficial instructions.

The Almighty bestowed upon him, besides other graces, the gift of prophecy and of reading the thoughts of the heart. At St. Lazare, on the opposite side of the bridge, a great feast was

given during the winter season. The holy man feared that in consequence of the old quarrel related above, one side or other might provoke a new feud by angry words or reproaches. He therefore, had a pulpit erected near the bridge, and from it exhorted all to love and harmony ending with the words: "I announce to you this beforehand: that he who dares to draw his sword will pay for the deed with his life. Keep therefore peace, that none of you, on this day, may become a prey to Hell." Notwithstanding this exhortation, one youth dared to quarrel with another and drew his sword against him. He had, however, instantly to experience the truth of the Saint's prediction; for he was killed on the spot. A woman wished to kiss the Saint's hand, but he, withdrawing it, said: "I will not permit my hand to be touched by one who carries the devil in her heart." The woman asked what he meant by these words; when he answered: "I know that you have determined to take your daughter's life, because she has become a mother without being wedded." These words clearly proved that God had bestowed upon him the gift of reading hearts. Many other similar events and many miracles might be told of this Saint, but space is wanting for us to relate them all, and we will only add a few words of his happy end.

St. John had converted, by the force of his sermons, a young man who, for a long time, had lived in criminal intimacy with an unchaste woman. The latter menaced the Saint that, before the year should end he would dearly pay for what he had done; and, in fact, she, in some manner, administered poison to him, which slowly wasted his strength. The Saint was more concerned about the sin that had been committed, than about his own suffering. He prepared himself, with great fervor for death, by receiving extreme unction, and joyfully resigned his soul into the hands of the Almighty, in the year 1479, just at the moment when the bells were rung for the Angelus. Soon after his death his countenance shone with such wonderful beauty and divine radiance, that all who beheld it were touched with veneration for the holy man. This, however, still increased when, by invoking his faithful servant, God wrought many miracles at his tomb. The first of these was, that a woman, named Beatrix, who for 23 years had had a paralyzed hand by touching the tomb of the Saint, recovered the entire use of it. Soon after, a dumb man received speech by invoking the aid of St. John, and a child crushed to death was restored to life with the use of all its limbs.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. John endeavored, with all his power, to reconcile minds that were hostile and embittered against each other, and to produce a lasting love and harmony between them. With many he was so fortunate as to succeed, although not without endangering his own life. If an opportunity offers itself to you to appease angry minds, to quiet or prevent contention and strife, to restore love and unity between others, hasten to follow the example of St. John. Oh! how much evil this holy man prevented by his sacred endeavors, and how many souls he thus saved from temporal as well as eternal destruction! You also will prevent many offences against the majesty of God, if you, as already remarked, follow the example of St. John. Should you, however, take for your model those who give occasion for strife and contention, who preserve or even increase enmity and discord, be assured that you make yourself accountable for all those sins which result from so doing. And what punishment have you one day to expect on account of it? The Holy Ghost says of a man who seeks or occasions strife and contentions: "A cruel angel shall be sent against him" (Proverbs xvii.). This signifies that the devil will have particular power over him. Take heed that this may not prove true as regards yourself.

II. St. John saw that many died suddenly, others lost their senses in their sickness, so that neither could confess before their end. Hence, he confessed frequently, so that he might be always prepared to die.

Oh! what a praiseworthy and beneficial solicitude! Have you ever heard of sudden deaths, as St. John had? I make no doubt that you have; why then do you not, like him, seek by frequent confession to place yourself in such a state as to be always ready to die? May not a sudden death take you into eternity laden with all your sins? May you not be deprived of your reason by fever in your sickness, and thus die without confession? Solicitous Christians confess at least once every month, if they have an opportunity. In this manner they are more quickly cleansed from sin, and more easily keep their conscience free. Whoever confesses seldom, is like a room which is seldom swept and becomes daily more disorderly. The conscience of a person who seldom confesses, is daily burdened with more sin. If he has not confessed for a long time, he has lived long in his sin, and whoever has lived long in his sin, has every reason to fear that he will die in it. But can there be a more unhappy death than to die laden with sin? "Whoever wishes not to die in sin, should not live in sin:" says St. Augustine; and I add: whoever wishes not to die in sin, should commit none; or, when he has committed it, not postpone confessing it. If he confesses frequently, he will not so easily commit sin, and will be always ready to die. Whoever is always prepared to die, has just reason to hope that his end will be happy. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching," says our Lord Jesus Christ. (St Luke xii.)

THIRTEENTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. ANTONY OF PADUA, CONFESSOR.

St. Antony, who derived his surname from the city of Padua, in Italy, because he spent many years there in preaching the Gospel, was a native of Lisbon, in Portugal. He received, in holy baptism, the name of Ferdinand, and was very piously educated by his parents. No sooner had he become acquainted with the dangers of the world, than he, in the fifteenth year of his age, to be safe from temptation, went into the cloister of the regular Canons, which is not far from Lisbon, where he also made his religious vows. As, however, he was disturbed too much there by the visits of his friends, he went, with the permission of his superiors, to Coimbra, into the monastery of the Holy Cross. To this house came, one day, five friars of the Order of St. Francis, who were travelling to Africa to preach the Gospel to the Moors. They suffered martyrdom, however, soon after their arrival there, and their holy bodies were brought back to the monastery of the Holy Cross, at Coimbra, and solemnly interred in the church attached to it. Antony, hearing how fearlessly these martyrs had preached the true faith and had suffered for Christ's sake, conceived an intense desire to preach the Gospel to the heathen and to give his life for the word of God. Hence, he determined to enter the Order of St. Francis, that he might have an opportunity to gratify the wishes of his heart.

After much hardship, he was at length, when 20 years of age, received into the Order, and after his novitiate, he obtained permission to sail for Africa and preach the Gospel to the Saracens. Scarcely had he arrived there, when God proved him by a severe sickness, which exhausted all his strength, and forced him to return to Spain. The ship, however, in which he embarked for home, encountered contrary winds, and instead of going to Spain, was driven to Sicily. No sooner had he set foot on land, than he heard that St. Francis, the holy founder of his order, had called a general chapter at Assisium. He immediately went thither, in order to receive the blessing of the Saint, which was cheerfully given. When the assemblage dispersed, not one among the superiors was found willing to be burdened with Antony, who was greatly enfeebled by his long illness, and moreover, was thought to be not quite sane. The Father Provincial of the Roman province was at last moved with compassion, and sent him to a house called Mount St. Paul, which was situated in a wilderness. There St. Antony lived a most austere life, performing the most humble labor, and occupying all his other time with prayers and holy meditations.

After passing several years in this manner, he was sent with a few other religious to Forli to be ordained priest. The guardian of the monastery requested the Dominican priests, who had also assembled there, that one of them should make an exhortation or deliver a short sermon. As they all excused themselves from so doing, he said, more in jest than in earnest, that brother Antony should speak to those assembled. Antony obeyed, and delivered so eloquent a sermon that all were astonished at his knowledge and ability, as, until now, they had deemed him one of the least gifted. Not willing that his extraordinary talent should any longer be hidden, St. Francis himself had him ordained priest, and gave him a double employment, namely, to instruct his brethren in theology and also to preach. The duties of both functions were discharged by him, with great credit to himself and an indescribable benefit to others. He converted the most hardened sinners by his sermons, and among others induced twenty-two murderers to do penance and change their wicked course of life. The heretics he convinced so thoroughly of their errors, that they could not withstand him, on account of which he was called the "Hammer of the heretics." Many of them he converted to the true faith, among whom was Bonovillus, who had denied the substantial presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Not able to reply to Antony's arguments he requested the following miracles. Having starved his ass for three days, he was to bring him food at the same time that Saint Antony should come with the holy Eucharist; and if the beast, before touching his food, should fall down before the Blessed Sacrament, he would believe the Saint's words. At the appointed time, the Saint arrived with the Blessed Sacrament, accompanied by many Catholics, and addressing the ass, which was held by Bonovillus, he said: "I command thee, in the name of thy Creator and my Saviour, whom I, although an unworthy priest, carry at this moment in my hands, that you come, in all humility, and pay Him due honors." Bonovillus, at the same time, threw down the animal's food and called him to come and eat. But without touching the food, the ass fell down on his fore knees, and bent his head. The Catholics rejoiced at this incontestable miracle, but the heretics hid their heads and Bonovillus was converted. At Rimini, the chief seat of the heretics, he ascended the pulpit; but as no heretic would come and listen to him, the Saint went to the sea-shore, where just at that time many of them were standing, and called to the fishes to hear his words, as men would not be instructed. And behold! suddenly a great number of fishes raised their heads out of the water, as if to listen. Speaking for a short time of their Creator, he blessed

and dismissed them. This miracle caused the heretics to listen more attentively to St. Antony and to follow his admonitions.

At another time, he made the sign of the cross over a goblet filled with poison, and drank it without being harmed. The cause of his doing this was that some heretics promised to return to the true Church, if he would drink the poison and not die. A perpetual miracle was the fact that, although he preached only in one language, yet all his hearers understood him, no matter what might be their nationality.

Who can count all the miracles God wrought through this Saint, or who can sufficiently praise the wonderful gifts with which he was graced? More than once it happened that at the same time when he was standing in the pulpit to preach, he appeared also in the choir and sang the lesson of the daily office of the Church, which was pointed out to him. He prophesied many future events and knew by divine revelation many secrets of the heart. There lived, in a French city, a writer, who publicly led a most immoral life. St. Antony resided for some time in this city, and as often as he met this man, he bowed very low to him. The writer, on perceiving it, was greatly incensed, as he believed it was done by the holy man only to deride him: hence he reproached him with menacing words. The Saint, however, replied: "Be not surprised that I show such respect to you before others. I have long prayed God for the grace to die a martyr, but it has not been granted me. You, however, will receive this honor, and therefore I evince such particular respect for you." Although the writer laughed and made a mockery of this prophecy, yet the future showed that the Saint had spoken the truth. After the expiration of some time, this immoral man made a voyage to the Holy Land, in company with the Bishop of the city. On arriving there, he was seized by the Saracens, who demanded of him that he should deny his faith. He, however, remained firm in confessing it, and after having been greatly tormented, he suffered the death of a martyr.

St. Antony was as undaunted and fearless in punishing the wicked, when circumstances required it, as he was famous by the gift of prophecy. At that period Florence was governed by Ezelinus, who, among other cruel deeds, had executed 11,000 men of Padua, part of whom were in his service and part in garrison at Verona, because the inhabitants of Padua had rebelled. Nobody dared to oppose this tyrant in the execution of further barbarities but St. Antony, who had sufficient courage to go to him, and representing most powerfully his inhuman conduct, threatened him with the just wrath of the Almighty and the torments of neil, in case he repented not and abstained from his tyranny.

During this menace flames of fire darted from the countenance of St. Antony, as Ezelinus afterwards related, which so thoroughly frightened the tyrant, that he fell trembling at the feet of the Saint, and most earnestly promised repentance. As he converted this and many other sinners by admonition, he moved others in a different way to do penance. Many said that he had suddenly appeared before them at night and exhorted them to repent. "Rise quickly, said he at such times, and confess the sin by which you have offended the majesty of God."

I should hardly know where to end, were I to relate all that St. Antony did to convert sinners, or how many future events he foretold. I will mention only a few more facts, from which the conclusion may be drawn that, as the holy man appeared in different places at the same time, so also, by the power of God, he was miraculously transported, in one moment, from one place to another. The father of St. Antony resided at Lisbon in Portugal, as treasurer of the royal revenues, the duties of which office he discharged with fidelity and integrity. One day, he was requested by some gentlemen in the king's service to advance them some money out of the king's treasury, making a verbal promise to return the same in a short time. The pious treasurer, who neither feared deception nor danger, gave them what they asked, without taking a written receipt. When the time arrived at which he had to deliver his account, he asked the officers for the borrowed money, but they denied having received any. This perfidy grieved the kind man deeply, and he knew not what to do. Seeking refuge in fervent prayers to God, he received help in a miraculous way through his son, who resided at that time in Italy. At the time he was to appear before the royal judge to be sentenced to return the missing money, his holy son suddenly appeared in the room, and addressed the officers in the following manner: "This kind man, my father, has advanced you, upon your request, a sum of money out of the royal treasury, on such a day, at such an hour, in such a place, as is well known to you. I warn you to return it to him and to indemnify him; otherwise, divine vengeance will strike you, and you will be heavily punished." The guilty men were not less astonished at the presence of the holy man, than at his menaces and the revelation of their wickedness. They immediately testified in writing how much each of them had received, promising at the same time to repay it in a short time. No sooner was this done, than the Saint disappeared from their view.

This pious treasurer was in still greater danger at another time. He was accused of having committed murder, and sentence

was to be executed on him and his servant on the following day Antony was at Padua; but God revealed to him what had taken place at Lisbon. The Saint asked permission of his superior to seek some recreation out of the city. Hardly was he out of the place, when, like Habakuk, he was carried by an angel through the air to Lisbon. He went to the judge and represented his father's innocence. Finding, however, no willing ear in the judge, he repaired to the grave of the murdered man, commanded him to rise, and leading him to the judge, he requested of him to say if his father was the man, who, with the aid of his servant had assassinated him. The risen man replied distinctly: "No: it was not he." The Judge requested that St. Antony should demand of him the name of the real murderer: the Saint, however, replied: "I have not come to bring death to a guilty man, but to rescue the innocent." Upon this, his father and his servant were released, and Antony was carried back to Padua by the angel.

After this wonder-working servant of God had filled all Italy and France with the fame of his miracles and conversions, God revealed to him his approaching last hour. He repaired to an isolated spot, and having prepared himself for his end, he returned very sick to Padua, received extreme unction, recited the seven Penitential Psalms, and his usual prayer: "O Glorious Lady, &c." The divine mother appeared to him with the child Jesus, and the Saint conversed with them most lovingly until his pure soul went to the abode of the blessed. This took place in 1231, when he was hardly 36 years of age. They desired to keep his death concealed from the people for some time, but the little children proclaimed it by calling out in the streets: "The Saint is dead." Thirty-two years later, when his holy remains were raised, his tongue was found entirely incorrupt. St. Bonaventure taking it in his hand, said: "O blessed tongue, which always praised God and taught others how to praise Him! Now we have evidence how great thy merits were before God!"

The Saint is generally represented with the divine Child, as He appeared to him and embraced him. The lilies are also dedicated to him as an emblem of his unspotted innocence and purity. It is well known that this Saint is invoked when things are lost or have been purloined. Countless occurrences show at this day that the intercession of this Saint is powerful at the throne of the Almighty

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Antony commands a senseless animal to fall down before the Blessed Eucharist and to honor it; the animal obeys and thus honors its Creator. You have, in the Holy Sacrament, your Lord and God, your Redeemer and Judge before you. You know the command of the Most High: "The Lord thy God thou shalt adore" (St. Mark iv.). "For every knee shall be bowed to thee" (Isaiah xlv.). The Church of Christ says to you and others: "Come, let us bow down and worship God: let us weep before God who has created us because He is our God and we are his people." Are you not then ashamed, if, notwithstanding all this, you conduct yourself, in the presence of the Holy Eucharist, with less reverence than an unreasonable animal? That those who are not Catholics should not manifest due honor to the Blessed Sacrament is wrong in them, but they have, at least before man, the excuse that they do not believe in the real presence of Christ. But how can you excuse yourself, either before God or man, you who believe in the presence of Christ, and yet give not due honor to your God? "If I believed," said a Turkish ambassador, one day, speaking of the little respect evinced by some Catholics in the Church, "that my God were substantially here, I would humble myself to the ground, and if possible, even beneath it." And what do you think, who believe it, and are still too indolent to bend your knee before your God? Do you not consider that your divine Judge, whom you honor so little, will one day punish your irreverence towards Him? Reform, while you have time.

II. The virtuous tongue of St. Antony, according to the testimony of St. Bonaventure, always praised the Lord and taught others to

praise him also. This is indeed a great praise, a splendid testimonial to the sanctity of St. Antony. Can you lay claim to similar praise? Is such a sign of virtue found in you? I leave these questions to be answered by your conscience. But I fear greatly that there is no member of your body, with which you have more frequently offended God and given scandal to your neighbor, than your tongue. Endeavor, therefore, in future to avoid this. It is true that the Evil One makes use of the tongue, in preference to every other member, as a tool to offend God, as St. Chrysostom says. The devil knows by experience that he has by it cast thousands into destruction, over whom he was not able to prevail by the misuse of any other member. Hence, according to the opinion of St. Jerome, when, by the permission of the Almighty, he covered the whole body of Job with a frightful disease, he left his tongue, lips and teeth free from it; because he hoped Job would with his tongue blaspheme the Lord and so commit sin. These are the words of the holy sufferer: "The flesh being consumed, my bone hath cleaved to my skin, and nothing but lips are left about my teeth" (Job xix.). "Hence," says St. Jerome, "Satan did not injure his tongue and lips, that he might leave him the means for blaspheming the Lord." But as Job, according to the testimony of Holy Writ, did not commit sin with his tongue, so may you, aided by the Almighty, avoid the vices of the tongue and use it as St. Antony did, in uttering the praises of God. Pray to him this day for the particular grace to follow the example of the Saint in this point. "O Lord, thou wilt open my lips: and my mouth shall declare thy praise" (Psalm l.).

THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. BASIL THE GREAT, BISHOP OF CÆSAREA.

St. Basil, who is called by the Holy Church, the Great, because he was truly so, not only in mind, eloquence and learning, but also in courage against the heretics, in zeal for the honor of God, in holiness and in miracles, was born in Cappadocia, of noble, rich, but at the same time, holy parents. He had three brothers who are also honored as Saints. He studied the liberal arts at Cæsarea, Constantinople, and lastly at Athens: in the last place he became acquainted with St. Gregory Nazianzen. St. Porphyrius, who was superior of a convent in Egypt, instructed him in Holy Writ. After this he visited the holy places and was on his return, ordained deacon by Bishop Meletius at Antioch, and began to preach in that city, and afterwards continued at Cæsarea, not only with the fame of great wisdom, but also with indescribable benefit to his hearers. At the latter place he was ordained priest. When he, however, perceived that even the bishop became jealous of him on account of the great reputation which he gained by his sermons, he fled secretly to a desert in the land of Pontus. There he lived several years with his friend Gregory, occupied in the study of Holy Writ, praying, fasting and watching. Many came to him, desirous to live more piously. The rules he gave them to regulate their conduct, were by no one kept more punctually than by himself. He also instructed the heathen inhabitants of the surrounding places in the true faith, and converted many of them.

Some years later, Valens, an Arian, ascended the imperial throne and persecuted the Catholics most cruelly. When St Basil was informed of this, he left the desert, repaired to Cæsarea, fearlessly opposed the heretics and strengthened the Catholics in their faith. Meanwhile the Bishop of that city died, and Basil much against his inclinations, became his successor. Invested with this dignity, he changed nothing in the austerity to which he had been accustomed while living in the desert; but he used the opportunities offered to him to be still more kind and charitable to the poor. A terrible famine took place at that time by which many lost their lives. The holy bishop sold all that he possessed and divided the money among the poor, and exhorted others in his sermons to be charitable to the needy. The sick he nursed with admirable humility, in a hospital which he had built for them. He hesitated not to give them food with his own hands, and to wash and bandage their wounds. But notwithstanding all these acts of pious kindness, he neglect-

ed not to combat the Arians, both with tongue and pen, and to guard his flock from their ravages.

Valens, the Emperor, sent one of his chief officers to Cæsarea to induce the saint to join the Arians, or else to drive him out of the city. Modestus, the imperial officer, summoned Basil into his presence, and addressed him haughtily in the following words: "Why do you not comply with the Emperor's wishes, and confess yourself to belong to his faith?" Basil fearlessly replied: "Because the Lord, my God, who is infinitely greater than your Emperor, forbids it." "Do you not fear then," said Modestus, "the power and wrath of the Emperor? He can deprive you of all your possessions, drive you from your country, make you suffer and languish, and even take your life." The holy man answered: "Whosoever possesses nothing, fears not that anything can be taken away from him. My country is heaven, out of which you cannot drive me. You cannot make me suffer long, as my body is so weak that his first blow will destroy my life. Death will be a favor to me; for it will bring me sooner to my God." Modestus, astonished at the boldness of this answer, said: "Nobody has ever dared to speak to me in such a manner." "This may be the case, because you have never spoken to a bishop, said Basil; for in cases like this, all bishops speak as I do." "I will give you this night," said Modestus, "to consider the wishes of the Emperor." "And I shall be the same to-morrow as to-day," replied Basil, as he went away. The Emperor himself was filled with admiration for the Saint, when he was informed of what had taken place; but the heretics left him no peace, until he gave orders that Bishop Basil should be placed in a carriage during the night and secretly carried away. Everything was in readiness to execute the Emperor's command, when suddenly the Empress and her son, a very young child, became dangerously sick. The physician despaired of their lives, and the Emperor, thinking it was a punishment sent by God because of his evil intentions against the holy Bishop, sent hastily to him to request earnestly that he would obtain from God the health of the mother and the child. Basil promised to comply with his wish on the condition that the Emperor would promise that the child should be baptized and educated in the Catholic faith. The Emperor consented, Basil prayed, and the Empress and the prince entirely recovered in the same hour. Hardly, however, had the Saint left the Emperor, when the latter, breaking his promise, had the child christened by an Arian bishop: but he was almost immediately punished, for the prince became sick again and died.

Some time later the Emperor, again incited against the Saint

intended to banish him; but when he sat down to sign the order, the chair suddenly broke under him. He rose, took three pens, one after the other, but was not able to write his name. None of them gave any ink, but all split in his hand, which itself began to tremble and lose all life. Hence, he tore the order, and left the Saint undisturbed. Many other miraculous events took place in regard to this holy bishop, to relate all of which would occupy too much space; as also all the labor he performed for the salvation of his flock and to the benefit of the whole Church. Neither can we relate how much he wrote in defence of the true faith, how valiantly he opposed the heretics, how carefully he guarded the faithful. To a steward of the Emperor, who dared to dispute with him about articles of faith, he gave an answer, which by a slight change would serve very well in our days for many who deem themselves wiser than they are. "Your office is," said he, "to attend to the soup in the kitchen, and to see that it is not too much salted; but not to dispute about articles of faith."

St. Ephrem saw the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove upon the shoulder of the Saint, whispering to him what to preach or to write. A Jew, who had crept secretly into the Church during Holy Mass, saw a beautiful child in the hands of the bishop, when he raised the consecrated Host, which miracle caused him to embrace Christianity. With another Jew, who had considerable medical knowledge, the saint had frequent conversations in the hope of converting him to Christ. When he became dangerously sick, he called the Jewish physician into his presence, and asked him what hope there was of his recovery. The Jew answered; "There is no hope: this very evening, the bishop will be a corpse." "But what would you say," said the Saint, "if I should still be alive to-morrow?" "It is impossible," was the Jew's reply; "if that should happen I will become a Christian." "I will remind you of your promise," said Basil: and turning his heart to God, he prayed fervently that his life might be prolonged for the conversion of the Jew. And in fact on the following day, the holy bishop arose from his bed entirely recovered. The Jew came, saw the miracle, and being already sufficiently instructed in the Christian faith, was led by the Saint into the Church, and amidst a crowd of people, baptized with his whole family. This being accomplished the Saint returned to his bed, his sickness reappeared, and a happy death soon ended his earthly pilgrimage.

Before his end, he exhorted all present to remain constant in the true faith, and zealous in the practice of virtue. After this he saw a host of angels who invited him to enter heaven. His

last words were; "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." His happy death took place in the year of our Lord 378.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Basil gave to the Arian steward who disputed with him on articles of faith a memorable and well-deserved reproof, as it is not becoming that such people should doubt or criticise what the true and infallible Church teaches. At the present day, nothing is more common than a desire in those who are not Catholics to dispute about articles of faith. And whom do they attack? Generally those they suppose are not very well versed in the knowledge of their faith. To these they say what they like. They cite a verse from Holy Writ, and expound it after their own fashion, thus seeking to mislead the Catholics. There are, however, Catholics also, who although they have never studied theology, pretend to understand Holy Writ better than the Holy Fathers, and who explain the most difficult mysteries of the faith more thoroughly than they; nay, who even dare to doubt the teachings of the true Church, and who consider lawful what priests, confessors and spiritual advisers unanimously declare to be sinful. We have here two dangerous kinds of men. As far as the first are concerned, do not dispute with them if you are not well instructed. Tell them to go to those whose office it is to expound and to defend the articles of faith. As for yourself, believe as true what the Catholic Church teaches, and you will walk in the sure path. To testify the truth of anything it is not sufficient to cite a few verses of Holy Writ, and explain them to one's own liking. Did not Satan do the same when he tempted Christ in the wilderness? The second kind of people you should shun as you

would shun heretics, and believe not their words, as they are not appointed to instruct you in articles of faith. This is the office of the priests, the preachers, and the confessors. To those Christ says: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me" (St. Luke, x.). And the prophet Malachy says: "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth: because he is the Angel (or messenger) of the Lord of Hosts" (Malach. ii.).

II. St. Basil said to the Imperial officer, that he obeyed not the Emperor, because God, an infinitely greater Lord, had forbidden it. And the Saint was right, for when a man commands what God forbids, our own reason tells us to obey God and not man, even if he were the greatest monarch on earth, because God is an infinitely greater and mightier Lord than all men. Hence, the two holy Apostles said to the Jewish priests who forbade them to teach in the name of Jesus: "If it be just in the sight of God, to hear you rather than God, judge ye!" (Acts iv.) Whence comes then the blasphemous manner of speaking which in our day has almost become a proverb; "Man's laws are above God's laws." Truly none but Satan himself could inspire such words. In times long gone by, he wished to be the Lord's equal; but now he incites some people to prefer the lord of earth to the Lord of heaven and earth. And who are those lords whose laws should be above the laws of God! Are they not men, though they are the greatest monarchs on earth? But what is man in comparison with

God? Less than a worm crawling on the ground, in comparison with the mighty monarch. Is it therefore reasonable to prefer the command of a creature to that of a Creator? For example, your governor, king or prince commands you to do something; but a servant orders you to do just the contrary; now if you obey the latter, saying that his commands were above those of your governor, king or prince, would it not be an unendurable offence to him and justly deserve punishment? would it not be a kind of rebellion and a great wickedness? For would it not be a sign that you obeyed the servant rather than the governor, because you esteemed the command of the servant above his? From this you may conclude, how unreasonable and blasphemous it is to say "Man's laws are above God's laws." I am willing to believe that many who speak thus do not mean what they say; but one ought to abstain from such words and instead of them say with St. Peter: "We ought to obey God rather than man. (Acts v.)"

FIFTEENTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. VITUS, ST. MODESTUS, AND ST. CRESCENTIA, MARTYRS.

Mazara, in Sicily, was the native place of St. Vitus or Guy, who, while yet very young, had the happiness of receiving the crown of martyrdom. His father, Hylas, was a pagan, and enjoyed a great reputation on account of his nobility and immense wealth. God so directed it, that the teacher whom Hylas gave to his son, was at heart a Christian, and he instructed Vitus so well in the Christian faith, that he requested most earnestly to be admitted into the Church, and was baptized without the knowledge of his father. No sooner was this accomplished, than the courageous youth, who was scarcely fifteen years old, was unwilling to conceal that he was a Christian, but proclaimed himself without hesitation as one of the faithful. God rewarded this fearlessness with the gift of miracles. Vitus, by only making the sign of the cross, restored sight to the blind, made the dumb speak, healed the sick and released the possessed from the evil spirit. When Hylas heard what his son had done without his knowledge, he called him to his room and asked him if it was true, as was said, that he had really embraced the Christian faith, the practice of which was so strictly forbidden in the whole empire? Vitus unhesitatingly confessed that he had become a Christian, because he was convinced that there was no other God but the God of the Christians.

The father, much incensed, made every possible effort to

cause his son again to forsake the faith he had so lately adopted. Flatteries and caresses, promises, menaces, nay, even tears were brought to bear, but all to no purpose; for Vitus remained inflexible, and assured his father that he would rather die a thousand deaths, than swerve from the Catholic religion. Hylas was enraged, and being himself a very zealous worshipper of the idols, he led his son to the Governor Valerian, with the request to bring him back to the worship of the old gods by compulsion. Valerian used every argument in his power, but finding it useless he ordered Vitus to be most cruelly scourged. The executioners were about to begin, when suddenly their hands and arms, as well as those of Valerian became so stiff that they were unable to move them and felt the most excruciating pains in them. The Governor declared this to be witchcraft,—as the Christians were commonly thought to be magicians and called for help. Vitus, pitying him, made the sign of the Cross over the stiffened limbs and thus healed them perfectly. Valerian had not the courage to do anything further against Vitus, but restored him to Hylas with the admonition that the father himself should try to persuade his son to return to his former worship.

Hylas now concocted a devilish plan. He endeavored to lead his son to depravity and vice, in order, by this means, to make him more easily yield to his wishes. He locked him up in a magnificent apartment with some wicked women; hoping that might be seduced by them to sin. Vitus at the first moment was horrified; but recovering his self-possession, he raised his hands and eyes on high and called on God to aid him. God sent one of his angels, whose brightness illumined the whole apartment, and who so visibly protected the youth, that none of the women dared to approach him. The father, curious to know the success of his plan, went to the apartment and looked through an opening in the door, but was so overcome by the light emanating from the angel, that he began to cry aloud with the pain in his eyes. Vitus was moved to compassion, and as his father called vainly to the gods for aid, he made the sign of the Holy Cross over him which not only took away his pains, but also cured his blindness, though it did not soften the obduracy of his will, nor remove the blindness from his soul. Instead of being brought by these miracles to the knowledge of the true faith, he became still more wicked, and ascribing it all to magic, he began to devise other means to turn his Son's mind. But an angel appeared to Modestus, the former teacher of Vitus, and to a certain Crescentia, who both had educated the holy youth, and ordered them to go on board a ship with Vitus and escape into another land. They obeyed the command, and arrived safely in Lucania,

a province of Naples, where, repairing to a desert, they led a most holy life.

Meanwhile, God permitted the daughter of the Emperor Dicolesian to be possessed of the Devil, who, one day while tormenting her, declared that he would not leave her until he was forced to do so by a youth named Vitus. They asked where he lived, and the Evil Spirit indicated his abode. Dioclesian had him brought into his presence and requested him to cure his daughter. The Saint said a short prayer, then laying his hands upon the head of the possessed, he made the sign of the Cross over her and said: "In the name of Jesus Christ, the true God, I command thee immediately to leave this body." The Evil One had to obey: he left the princess forthwith, uttering many invectives against the Saint. The Emperor was greatly astounded at this event, but instead of learning by it the truth of Christianity, he endeavored, by flatteries and promises, to persuade Vitus to forsake it. As he, however could not succeed, his wrath kindled and he gave orders to cast Vitus, Modestus and Crescentia into a dungeon, and after having tortured them there in various cruel ways, he precipitated them into a cauldron filled with boiling tar. Vitus had made the sign of the Cross over it, and the Almighty, who had preserved unharmed the three youths in the furnace of Babylon, wrought upon these three holy Martyrs a similar miracle. All three remained uninjured. The tyrant was not willing to confess himself conquered, and commanded that they should be stretched upon the rack and most barbarously tortured. But so terrible an earthquake, accompanied by a storm, shook the ground under their feet that the assembled people fled away. An angel came and loosening the holy Martyrs from the rack, healed their wounds and carried them back into the desert; where, thanking God for the grace vouchsafed to them, they peacefully slept; going to the Lord Jesus Christ in the year 300.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. St. Vitus was in the utmost danger of losing his purity, but kept it inviolate. Why? Because he was not placed in this danger by his own free will, but came into it without his consent, and set all his power against it. Take heed! There are two kinds of danger of falling into sin: the first is called voluntary: when we seek the occasion of sin, go into it consciously, or remain in</p>	<p>it knowingly. The other is involuntary, when we fall into danger without knowing it, or without our free will; and a danger which we cannot escape, or in which we must remain. In the latter, we may be sure of the assistance of God, if we are but willing to aid ourselves. Not so, however, in the former. "God protects those," says St. Bernard: "who innocently fall into temptation, or who</p>
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nave to remain in it against their will: but not those who run wantonly into it, or who remain in it by their own consent."

In regard to this important matter, observe the following advice:

I. Do not go knowingly into the danger of sin. By doing so you already commit one sin, and expose yourself to commit many more.

II. On perceiving yourself to be in danger of sin, endeavour to tear yourself away as quickly as possible: for, if you remain in it, you live in continual sin.

III. Should you be unable to avoid the danger, or tear yourself away from it, ask your confessor what you must do, and follow his directions. If you do not follow his directions, you will live in continual sin.

IV. Should you suddenly fall into danger, especially should you be tempted by a wicked person to sin against purity, resist with all your strength: try to save yourself by flight, cry for help without the least regard for the person who tempts you. But call at the same time, and with confidence, on God to give you aid; and you will experience that the same God still lives, who protected St. Vitus in the greatest danger, and who kept him unharmed, in spite of all the endeavors of his cruel persecutors.

You must also know that it is a terrible deception of the devil, and a great presumption, when one runs voluntarily into the danger or remains in it, because he imagines that he will not commit sin. Experience, the holy Fathers, and Holy Writ, all teach the contrary. "It is a delusion of the devil," says St. Cyprian, "if you believe that you are far from sin, when you are voluntarily in the occasion of sin." Therefore, do not venture into temptation; do not trust yourself too much; act not

presumptuously. Follow the teachings of St. Innocent, who says: "Avoid suspicious persons, flee from the house where you have opportunity to sin. For it is as difficult to be in the fire and not to burn, as it is to have an opportunity to commit sin and yet to refrain from it." St. Chrysostom says, that it is even a greater miracle to be in danger and not to sin, than to be in the midst of the fire without being burned.

II. St. Vitus received, as you have read, a great many benefits from the holy angels. The angels must have had a particular love for him, because they protected him so wonderfully and saved him from the wrath of his persecutors. And why this? Resemblance is the mother of love. St. Vitus loved the angelic virtue of purity. By this he resembled the angels. "For," as St. Cassian says, "nothing makes us so like the angels as the virtue of purity." St. Ambrose says the same in other words: "Purity makes men equal to Angels." Yes, as the same teacher says, it changes man into an angel: while, on the contrary, the vice of impurity changes man into a devil. "Whoever loves chastity, says he, and keeps it inviolate, is an angel: but whoever loses it by sin, is a devil." "Chastity," writes St. Peter Chrysologus, "is always related to the angels." This signified that it is the means which unites men and angels in the intimate bonds of fellowship and friendship. And as true friends love and help each other, is it to be wondered at when the angels particularly help the chaste and pure? If you desire the holy angels to love you, and assist you in your need, love purity, and avoid everything against it, in thought, word or deed. The instructions of St. Jerome, on this point, are: "If you desire the protection of the angels, flee from the

voluptuousness of the world, and oppose manfully the temptations of the devil." "For," as St. Ambrose writes, "the angels specially assist the chaste, and guard them."

SIXTEENTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. FRANCIS REGIS, CONFESSOR OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

In 1737, Pope Clement XII. canonized, with the usual ceremonies, the missionary, John Francis Regis, a priest of the Society of Jesus, celebrated through the whole of France on account of the holiness of his life and the many wonders he wrought.

He was born of noble parents, January 31, 1597, in a village in the diocese of Narbonne, and already in childhood, gave such proofs of piety that the conclusion might be naturally drawn that he was destined to become a great saint. He took no pleasure except in praying, studying, visiting the churches and reading books of devotion. He lived in an angelical retirement, carefully avoiding all occasions of sin; one proof of this is that during his whole life he never said the least word that was not the exact truth. While he was yet studying in the lower classes in a college of the Society of Jesus, he fled the companionship of all those who seemed in the least degree frivolous, and made an alliance with six of his classmates, who appeared to him more inclined to piety than the others, to the end that they would pray and study at appointed times, read a devout book during meals, never say anything that was not strictly honest or useful, daily make an examination of conscience, frequently receive the Holy Communion, hear the word of God on Sundays and holy-days; seldom leave the house and never without need, and shun all opportunities which might lead them to do wrong. These rules, which Francis, then still very young, had prescribed, he himself observed most punctually, and hence he was greatly esteemed by everybody.

In 1616 he entered, at Toulouse, into the Society of Jesus, to which he believed he had a vocation. The two years of his noviciate he spent in such a manner, that no one could find any thing in him to blame. On the contrary, he might have served as a model to all of spiritual perfection. Afterwards, when he was sent to Tours to study the higher branches, his fervent zeal for the salvation of others became at once visible; for on Sundays and holy-days, he accompanied the priests, who taught the ignorant in the villages, and was of great service to them.

Still more apparent became his zeal when he was employed in teaching children in the lower classes. By his devout conversations and fatherly admonitions, but still more by the influence of his own example, his ascendancy over them became so great, that they were easily distinguished from the rest by their piety and retirement. When he was ordained priest, his pious zeal knew no bounds. His first opportunity to give a proof of it occurred at Toulouse, which city was, in 1630, ravaged by a terrible plague. At his own request, Francis received the permission of his superiors to nurse those who were stricken down by the dreadful malady, and was most kind and tender in his treatment of them. The same he did in 1640 at Montfaucon. Francis desired to devote his life to so noble a work, but divine Providence preserved him among daily dangers for the salvation of many thousand souls. The ten years which followed from his ordination to his death, he spent mostly in missionary work.

It was his wish to cross the ocean and preach the Gospel to the savages in Canada; but as his superiors did not consent to this, he made Europe the field of his labor to save souls for heaven. All Languedoc, especially the diocese of Viviers and the Velay, were assigned to him, where he did perhaps more than he could have hoped to do among the savages. In the summer time, he occupied himself in the cities, by preaching and instructing, by hearing confessions and visiting the hospitals and prisons, by collecting alms for the poor, especially for the sick whom he served day and night, and with other similar works of charity. The winter he spent in the villages in apostolic missions. He suffered indescribable dangers and hardships not only on account of the many and high mountains, but also from the extreme cold, the rain, snow and other inconveniences of the weather. Often he was seen crawling, rather than walking, over mountains covered with ice and snow, where almost every step endangered his life. At the places where he gave his missions he permitted himself but very little rest. He preached daily at least once, but more frequently twice or three times. More than once he was so exhausted, that he had to be carried home from the pulpit or the confessional. He was occupied in hearing confessions not only during the day, but also many hours during the night. Not until evening did he partake of any refreshment, and often when the number of those around the confessional was very great, he went without any earthly sustenance. He always took so little food that it was hardly enough to sustain life, and he never tasted wine or delicate viands. The bread which he had begged was his principal nourishment. Two or

three hours was all the time he allowed himself for rest at night, and this on the bare ground or on a board. He constantly wore a sharp-pointed chain, and pitilessly scourged himself every night. Such holiness, such entire self-abnegation, procured for the zealous missionary so great a reputation, that he went by no other name than that of "The saint." The conversions of hardened heretics and despairing sinners effected by his sermons, were numberless. The bishops themselves testified, that, in the cities and villages where St. Francis held his missions, the conduct of the inhabitants had entirely changed. A certain vicar-general wrote about him as follows: "I have always looked upon him as an angel, on account of the innocent life he led, and I have honored him as a perfect model of virtue, and on account of his fervent zeal, a worthy brother and follower of St. Francis Xavier. I regarded him as a father of the poor, in consideration of his great love for them; and as a Saint on account of his virtues. He not only was, but still is, esteemed as a Saint by the inhabitants of the city of Puy, and is even considered an apostle, because, both by his example, his sermons, his exhortations and his instructions, he led them to a better life, and, so to speak, made the whole city holy."

For ten years this man of God continued his missionary labors in the same manner. Near the end of his earthly career, he intended to hold a mission at La Louvesc, a small village, situated between high mountains in the diocese of Vienne. But God revealed to him his approaching last hour; hence he went first to the College at Puy, made a general confession, and then repaired to La Louvesc on the 22d of December in the year 1640. Before he left the college, he was asked if he would not be there on New Year's day, at the usual ceremony of renewing the vows. "My companion will be here, but not I," was his answer. And so it happened. The road to La Louvesc was over steep mountains, covered with snow and ice, and was indescribably difficult to travel. As the cold was exceedingly severe, the Saint was soon exhausted with fatigue and covered with perspiration from his exertions. Overtaken by the night, he was unable to reach La Louvesc and was obliged to remain in an old hut, open on all sides, where he was seized with pleurisy and subsequently with a burning fever. Exerting all his strength, he arrived the following day at La Louvesc. Seeing the crowd of people waiting for him, he ascended the pulpit and commenced his mission with a fervent sermon. The following day and night he spent in hearing confessions; and this might well be regarded as a miracle, considering the state of his health. On Christmas-day and on the festival of St. Stephen he preached three times, and again

returned to the confessional, when suddenly he swooned away and had to be carried into the priest's house. No sooner had he somewhat recovered, than he again heard the confessions of several persons, after which, with deep inward peace, he received Extreme Unction. On the last day of the year he fell into ecstasy while praying, and when he awoke from it he exclaimed in a transport of joy to his companion: "O! dear! how happy I am to die! Oh! how glad I am to depart! I see Jesus and Mary who come to accompany me into the home of the Elect." After this, he turned his eyes towards heaven and said: "Jesus Christ! My Redeemer! To Thee I commend my soul; into Thy hands I resign myself;" with these words he ended his apostolic life in his 43d year. An incredible number of people were present at his burial, and deplored his death with many tears. Countless are the miracles with which God immediately honored him at his grave. Twenty-two Archbishops and bishops wrote, in 1704, to the Pope, that they themselves had witnessed miracles which had been wrought at the grave of this faithful servant of God, on the blind, the deaf, the lame, and on persons afflicted with other ills. It is also known that he seldom held a mission anywhere without working miracles. The greatest miracle was himself, as it was naturally impossible that, with so much rigor towards his body, with so many and such wearisome journeys, and such incessant labor, he should live so long. The mighty hand of the Lord alone upheld him.

I have not yet related anything of the heroic virtues of this Saint, which alone would fill a book. In to-day's prayer of the Church two are particularly mentioned before all others: his great charity and his invincible patience. Yes, his heart burned with love towards God and men. His love to God he evinced by avoiding even the smallest sin, and by his constant endeavor to prevent others from going astray. He evinced it further by fervent prayers, which he sometimes continued through the greater part of the night or through the whole of it, and during which he was often transported out of himself, so intense was his desire to suffer and die for Christ's sake. His love to his neighbor he manifested by spiritual and corporal works of mercy, on account of which he received the beautiful name of "Father of the Poor." And in truth, he was a most kind and tender father to them. The Almighty rewarded this love and solicitude with striking miracles. Thus we read that the corn which the good father had begged for the poor was often miraculously multiplied. In regard to the patience of this true servant of God, it may be said that nothing could be more perfect; it was invincible. Among his other deeds of Christian charity, his endeavors

to turn wicked women from the path of eternal ruin and lead them to repentance, deserve specially to be mentioned. Who, however, can describe the persecution, the obloquy and wrong he suffered on account of it? One man whom the Saint had thus deprived of his sinful gratification, gave him a blow in the face. The Saint offered him his other cheek, and said he was willing to suffer death, if he were permitted to prevent offences against God. Another thrust him, in the dark, into a pool of mire and stepped upon him. Some others plotted together and beat him almost to death; while some pointed their daggers to his breast and threatened to kill him if he abstained not from his intentions. But the Saint was always fearless; he disregarded these threats and was not to be deterred from finishing a work which he had commenced to the honor of God and for the salvation of souls. He complained to no one of the wrong done him by these godless people; nay, once, when the authorities were about to punish one of them, he interceded for him and thus averted his well-merited punishment. Many other examples of patience, meekness, humility, obedience, and other virtues are to be found in the circumstantial life of the Saint, but which we, on account of our limited space, are obliged to omit.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Great was the love which inflamed the heart of St. Francis, as well towards God as towards his neighbor. He proved his love to God by avoiding even the least sin, and by his unwearied zeal to prevent others from doing evil. His love to men he manifested by the practice of deeds of corporal and spiritual mercy. Should I ask you whether you love God and your neighbor, you would of course answer: "Yes." But how do you manifest your love in deeds? You often have opportunities of doing good to the soul and body of your neighbor, and thus to manifest your love to him, in the practice of divers acts of charity. If you omit these, the love which is only upon your lips will not avail you. "If a brother or sister be naked and want daily food; and one of you say to them: go in peace, be you warmed and filled, yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?" (James, ii.) Hence, prove your love towards your neighbor by spiritual and corporal works of charity. . . . How do you manifest your love to God? The best way is to keep His commandments, and not only to avoid sin yourself, as an offence to the majesty of the Almighty, but also to prevent others from committing it. "If you love me, keep my commandments," says the Lord. (John, xiv.) "You that love the Lord, hate evil," says David. (Psalm xcvi.) "We love God rightly when we keep His commandments," writes St. Ambrose. "Sin is unknown to him who loves Thee, O God," are the words of St. Cyprian. St. Augustine writes: "He who

loves God, does not offend Him. If you love God, draw others also to Him." "Whoever loves God seeks to prevent others from offending Him, and if this is impossible, almost dies with anguish, like him who says: "I beheld the transgressors and I pined away" (Psalm cxviii.). Thus speaks St. Francis de Sales.

II. Invincible was the patience of St. Francis, and neither the cares, labors, nor annoyances of his functions, nor the many afflictions, wrongs and persecutions which he had to endure, forced an impatient word to escape his lips, or restrained him in his apostolic zeal. He never was heard to utter a word of complaint against his persecutors, but prayed for them. He revealed to no one the wrong he suffered, but laid it at the feet of the crucified Lord, whose image he carried almost constantly in his hand or upon his breast. What is your conduct when you have to suffer, or are annoyed in the station you occupy in life? Why do you so quickly lose all patience? Why do you break out into invectives against your enemies, nay, even sometimes against the Almighty Himself? You surely desire to go to heaven, and to the heaven which the Saints entered by patience in crosses and afflictions. But do you wish to enter it without suffering, without persecution, without sorrow? Is that reasonable? Christ Himself chose the way of the cross, as the surest path which leads to heaven. Shall He assign to you a particular road, strewn with roses, and smoothed for your comfort? We have to suffer, and to suffer patiently, if we would gain heaven. "Through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God" (Acts xiv.). These tribulations we must suffer with patience. If you suffer them impatiently, what benefit do you derive from them? "Willing or unwilling, you have to suffer," says St. Chrysostom. If you are willing to bear your cross, you will gain much, but if you are unwilling, the burden will not become less, but your very impatience will help to increase its weight. As you thus see that suffering is the lot of man, consent to suffer: in other words, make a virtue of necessity, and suffer patiently.

SEVENTEENTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. LUDGARDE, VIRGIN.

The Roman Martyrology mentions this holy virgin on the 16th of June, but we will give her life to our readers to-day. Ludgarde was born of noble parents in Brabant, at Tongres. Her father thought of keeping her at home, and educating her after the fashion of the world; but her mother, who desired to make her a handmaid of the Lord, sent her, when scarcely twelve years old, to a Convent of the order of St. Benedict, to be there instructed in virtue and such work as was suitable to her. Ludgarde, unhappily had made, at that period, without her

mother's knowledge, a very unedifying acquaintance with a youth of rank, who often visited her and with whom she had long conversations. One day, while she was conversing with him, Christ appeared to her, and showing her the wonders of his sacred Heart, said: "Behold here, whom, and why thou shalt love, and renounce thine unwise affection." Ludgarde, deeply moved by the sight, became ashamed of her conduct, and her heart, freeing itself from all earthly love, was suddenly filled with fervent devotion towards her Saviour. Interrupting her idle conversation with the youth, she went into her room and prostrating herself before the crucifix, she repented of her fault. Begging, with tearful eyes, to be forgiven, she promised to consecrate, from that hour, all her love to her Saviour alone.

She kept her promise, and, devoted solely to prayer, devout reading, meditating on the Passion of Our Lord, she detached herself from all human affections, and would speak only of God and His great love to man. She regretted most bitterly that she had formerly not loved God perfectly as she ought to have done. The sisters in the convent were much astonished at the sudden change in her, and doubted that she would persevere. She herself feared her own weakness; but the Blessed Mother appeared to her, saying: "Fear not; I will aid you to continue firmly in the path of virtue." And Ludgarde continued and remained firm until her end.

From the time when, with heroic self-abnegation, she had renounced all human affection in order to give all her love to her crucified Lord, God honored her with many heavenly apparitions and other divine graces. One day, Christ appeared to her on the Cross, at the entrance of the church. Loosening one arm from the Cross, He laid it full of tenderness around her and pressed her to the holy wound in His side, and filled her heart with divine comfort.

Her greatest delight consisted in meditating on the Passion of Christ. She, herself, had to bear many great wrongs, reproaches and derision, but one glance at her Saviour's crown of thorns gave her strength and endurance. She remained twelve years in this convent, at first only as a boarder, but later as an humble lay-sister. By divine revelation, she afterwards repaired to a convent of the Cistercian Order, called Acqira or Aviera, four miles from Brussels. Here she lived nearly forty years in the uninterrupted exercise of virtue, especially a fervent love to the Almighty. This love awakened in her the desire to suffer for the sake of God and to die for the faith. While reading the life of St. Agnes, a fervent desire to suffer for her Saviour as this Saint had suffered, took possession of her, and augmented to such

an extent that a vein near her heart burst, from which the streaming blood often stained her habit. Christ then appeared to her and promised that in reward of her fervent desire, she should receive the same recompense which He had given to St. Agnes. The wound from the broken vein remained in her body as long as her life lasted. At another time, the Blessed Virgin appeared to her with a sorrowful countenance, and said: "The heretics and godless Christians scourge and crucify my Son anew!" She commanded her, at the same time, to begin a seven years' fast and to do other penances, in order to appease the wrath of the offended God, that He might not punish all mankind for their sins. The pious virgin kept this fast most strictly, partaking only of water, bread or some herbs. Hardly had the seven years elapsed, when she began, with the same rigor, a new fast of the same duration, and after this, a third, thus continuing a severe fast almost through her whole life. The second seven years' fast she offered to God for those who lived in mortal sin; and the third, that God might protect His Church against her enemies and convert them to the true faith. The more fervently this holy virgin evinced her love to God by the practice of every virtue, the more graces did she obtain from the Almighty. Among these were the following. She possessed the gift of healing diseases; she was able to read the thoughts of the heart, and foretell future events. It is also well authenticated that she prophesied to many the hour of their death. Her prayers had a wonderful power of obtaining what she asked. Many souls, languishing in purgatory, whom she had relieved from their pains, appeared to her and offered her their thanks. For many hardened sinners she asked of God the grace of conversion; for many despondent and inconsolable hearts, hope and peace; and for numberless others, the graces they most needed and desired. A gentleman of noble birth, but who led a wicked life, requested, through his daughter who was in the Convent, the prayers of the Saint. She prayed for him and God deprived him gradually of all his wealth, which led him to the knowledge of his sins, to true repentance, to a Christian life and finally, to a happy death. A lay-sister, who was almost in despair, was, by the prayer of the Saint, released from all her scruples, and strengthened with a firm hope. For a deaf woman she prayed until God had restored her hearing, and for one who was afflicted with epilepsy, she obtained from the Most High the return of health. Although Evil Spirits endeavored oftentimes to disturb the Saint in her prayers, they quickly fled, when, using the words of the Psalmist she said: "O God, be attentive to my cry!"

Eleven years before her death, God deprived her of sight, but she bore this heavy trial with admirable patience, as her greatest desire had always been to suffer. Five years before her death, she knew, by divine revelation, the day it would happen, and, during this time, she was favored with more visions of Christ and the Blessed Virgin than before. A severe fever hastened her end, for which she carefully prepared herself by receiving the holy Sacraments. In her last moments she beheld many holy virgins descend from heaven to accompany her soul to the throne of the Almighty. The divine Mother also appeared to her inviting her to enter the joys of heaven. She departed this life in the year of our Lord, 1246. By piously touching her holy body, the blind recovered their sight, the lame and sick were restored to strength and health.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "Behold here, whom you should love, and why you should renounce your unwise affection." Thus spoke Christ to Ludgarde when she had bestowed her heart upon a creature. Yes, surely, an unwise, a wicked love it is when, setting God aside, we give all our affection to a miserable human being. Tell me, what has a creature ever done to deserve that you should thus love him? What have you received, what can you expect of him? Ah! turn your eyes upon your crucified Lord and see whom you should love and consider why you should love Him. You should love Him who loved you before any one else, who has loved you always, who will love you while time exists and who will love you during Eternity. You should love Him who proved His love to you, when for your sake He descended from heaven, and after having lived thirty-three years in poverty, sorrow and ignominy, ended His life in bitter sufferings, by a cruel death. He of whom I speak is your Saviour, your Redeemer, Jesus Christ. He shows you the wound of His Sacred

Heart, and with it the reason why you should love Him. Where is the human being who can give you such proofs of his love? If you find one, go and love him more than your Jesus. But where will you find him? Neither in heaven nor on earth. Therefore, no one exists but Jesus, who deserves that you should love him above every one else. Recall this truth in looking at the image of your wounded and crucified Saviour, and say to yourself: My wounded, my crucified Lord is alone worthy to be loved above everything. "Let us love, most fervently love, and with all our strength cleave to our crucified Saviour." These are the words of St. Bernard.

II. Upon the first admonition of Christ, Ludgarde unhesitatingly broke off all her intercourse with the youth above mentioned, and consecrated all her love to her Saviour. Remaining faithful to Him, she bitterly repented that she had not always loved Him who deserves to be loved above all things. The consideration of Christ's love towards you should have the same

effect upon you. If you have given a place in your heart to an unwise, disorderly or evidently sinful love for a human creature, renounce it this very day. This day give your whole heart solely to Him, whose own was wounded for your sake and who shed for you the last drop of His blood. You cannot give Him only a part of your heart; for, He who has given Himself for your redemption, must possess it all. To divide it between Him and the world or any human being, would be to do Him great wrong. "My Son, give me Thy heart" (Prov. xxiii.). This is his request. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart" (Matt. xxii.). This is the divine commandment. You must love no human creature, except for God's sake, and none so much as God, much less more than Him. Repent for having passed so much time without loving God with your whole heart. Begin to-day to turn all your thoughts to Him, and continue so to do until your end, in order that, as you did not commence your life by loving God, you may at least end it in His love. "Love God with all thy strength" (Eccl. vii.). "Love God all thy life." (Eccl. xiii.).

EIGHTEENTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. LANDELIN, ABBOT, AND ST. RAMUOLD. CONFESSOR.

The life of St. Landelin presents to us a glorious example of the infinite mercy of God towards sinners, and at the same time, gives us the model of a truly repentant and converted sinner. Landelin was a native of Cambray, and the son of rich and noble parents. As soon as he was old enough to receive instruction, he was given into the charge of the holy Bishop Aubert, who not only guided him in the study of the liberal arts, but was still more solicitous to guide him in the path of virtue. In both of these Landelin made such progress, that his parents, as well as the bishop, were well satisfied. Aubert advised him to enter the clerical state, as God had bestowed upon him many gifts which promised him success in so wide a field. Landelin was not disinclined to follow this advice; but no sooner was this observed by his friends, than they endeavored to change his thoughts. They represented to him the easy life which he might lead, and the enjoyments and pleasures his riches would procure him. They frequently invited him to various amusements and thus made not only his studies, but also his devotional exercises distasteful to him. Becoming more and more attached to worldly pleasures, he refused to submit any longer to the direction of his holy teacher. Leaving him secretly, he joined some frivolous young people, with whom he wantonly caroused until

the money he had taken with him was all spent. Not knowing how to sustain himself, he became the companion of thieves and murderers, and lived by robbery.

The holy bishop, grieved at having lost a pupil who had been so dear to him, became still more so, when he heard in what danger Landelin was of being eternally ruined in soul and body. Hence he prayed ceaselessly for him to the Almighty, and with many tears, austere fasts and other good works, implored the conversion of the youth. God heard the Saint's petitions and converted Landelin in a miraculous manner. He and his vicious companions had selected a house which they were to rob during the night. They had already assembled for their wicked purpose, and everything was in readiness to put their plan into execution. The ladder was already raised against the house; one of the robbers ascended, but when he had gained the top of it, fell down at the feet of his companions, a corpse. All were horrified and ran away. Landelin, more shocked than any of the others, fled into the woods, and, while meditating on this sad, sudden death, he fell into a sleep, during which his Guardian Angel appeared to him. Showing him a place in hell where the unhappy companion of his vices, so lately taken away in his sin, was already tormented by the devils, he said: "What dost thou say now, Landelin? Hast thou still the desire to join thy companion? Behold how he suffers, and rest assured, that the same punishment awaits thee in case thou dost not repent." Landelin awoke trembling with fear, and falling down on his knees, he offered fervent thanks to God for the great mercy shown him, promised to reform, and prayed for sufficient strength. Immediately after this, he left his vicious companions, and without saying a word to them of his intention, he went to the holy Bishop Aubert, cast himself at his feet, begged, with tearful eyes, to be forgiven, and to be instructed as to the course he should pursue to regain the lost grace of the Almighty. Aubert, greatly rejoiced, received him as a father would receive a long-lost son, and encouraged him to repent with his whole heart and confess his evil deeds; which advice Landelin hesitated not to follow.

All his future life was spent in true repentance. No day passed in which he did not weep bitterly over his sins, and chastise his body by fasts, scourges and other penances. He was anxious to find means to mortify it more and more, by suffering heat and cold, hunger and thirst, long watching and praying. This life of penance he continued, without abating in his fervor, until his end. The remembrance of the torments of hell, which were always before his mind, allowed him not to grow indiffer

ent, and made every penance light and easy. When St. Aubert had received sufficient proof of Landelin's constancy, he ordained him priest, that he might more effectually preach repentance to others and exhort them to follow his example. The new priest began his labors with indescribable success, as not only his mouth, but still more his life preached a strikingly effective sermon. After some years, however, he retired into a desert, where he erected some cells for himself and for those who, like himself, wished to lead a penitential life. The number of penitents who repaired thither to live under his direction became so large, that, in the course of time, he built four monasteries to give them shelter. He governed all these houses himself for many years, and guided their inmates in the path of virtue. Shortly before his end, he retired for a time from those in his charge, to apply himself only to prayers and meditations on eternity. A fever which overtook him he considered as a messenger of death, and having called all his religious around him, he gave them his last instructions, received the holy Sacraments, and then, humbly trusting in the Almighty, peacefully closed his eyes.

God honored the tomb of the Saint by many miracles wrought there in favor of the sick.



We will add to the life of St. Landelin that of another Abbot, St. Ramuold. He was born in Franconia, of illustrious parents; and received a most pious education. He learned Latin at home, but was instructed in all the higher branches of knowledge at Triers, where, anxious to serve God more fervently, he entered the Benedictine Order, in the monastery of St. Maximin. Having lived there with great edification, until he had reached his 75th year, he was appointed by St. Wolfgang, the holy bishop of Ratisbon Abbot of the monastery of St. Emmeram. Ramuold performed his new functions to the great benefit and satisfaction of the religious, until he had arrived at the ripe age of one hundred years. His holy conduct and strict observance of all the rules of the Order incited all those under him to strive after spiritual perfection. His charity towards his neighbor induced him to erect two houses in the neighborhood of his monastery, one of which was designed to shelter strangers, the other to receive and nurse the sick. In both of these houses he performed many deeds of kindness, as he saw only Christ our Lord Himself, in the persons of the poor.

After some time God tested the patience of His servant, by

depriving him of sight. The Saint, although sorely suffering under this cross, bore it with remarkable patience, and said to those who manifested their sorrow on seeing him thus afflicted: "The loss of temporal light is not to be regretted, when there is hope of the eternal light. God, who has deprived me of my sight, can also restore it; but even if he wills it not so, I have no cause to complain, but every reason to praise, fear and love Him." His blindness lasted for two years, after which, by the intercession of St. Emmeram, his sight was entirely restored to him; for which great mercy he gave most fervent thanks to his Lord and Creator. After the death of St. Wolfgang, the successor of this holy bishop accused Ramuold of having calumniated the Emperor Otho. This so roused the Emperor's wrath against the Saint, that he did not deign to look at him when, on his visit to the Church, the Abbot at the head of the religious came to meet him. The Emperor was, however, soon convinced of Ramuold's innocence, and conceived the greatest esteem for him, so that he took his counsel in all the most important affairs of the State, while at the same time he severely reproved the wickedness of the false accuser of the holy Abbot.

At the age of one hundred years, a most painful disease befell Ramuold; but by meditation on the torments of hell and the passion and death of Christ, he considerably diminished his suffering. One day, finding himself entirely free from all pain, he asked for his religious habit, exhorted, for the last time, those in his charge and gave them his fatherly blessing. After this he gave orders that he should be carried into the chapel which was next to his room, and there be laid between the two altars of St. Emmeram and St. Kilian, where, having received extreme unction, he gave his soul into the keeping of the Most High. St. Henry, at that time still duke of Bavaria, but later, Emperor of Rome, and Bishop Gebhard assisted in carrying the holy body to its final resting-place, where in the course of time many miracles took place; devils were cast out, the blind received their sight, and other infirmities were cured.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. God seizes the vicious companion of Landelin, punishes him by sudden death and casts him into hell. He spares Landelin, and gives him time and grace to work out his salvation. How immeasurable a mercy towards so wicked a sinner! But tell me, has God shown less mercy to you? Have you not deserved the fire of hell just as well as those who are already there and who were perhaps your companions in evil deeds? Could not the Almighty have let you die in your sin? "Where, in such case, would you be now? Where

should I be, if I had died at that time? Where else except in the fire of hell, in the horrible punishment that I deserve?" Thus asks and replies the repentant St. Augustine. Must you not confess the same of yourself? But consider, that the merciful God who spared Landelin and condemned his companion, has also spared you, while He condemned many others. He still gives you time and grace to repent and work out your salvation. To-day, then, humbly prostrate yourself and give thanks to your great and merciful God. Renew your gratitude daily, and begin earnestly to improve your life, that you may go to everlasting happiness.

II. The sight of the torments of hell induced Landelin to do penance, and the remembrance of the same caused him to continue his penances and made the most austere life seem light and easy. The same thoughts diminished the pains which St. Ramuold suffered during his illness. God does not give you a sight of the torments of hell in your sleep, as he did to Landelin; but, by faith, you may see them while awake. That there is a hell is taught you by your holy faith. Hell is, according to the words of the rich man, who had experience of what he said, a place of torments: that is, a place where nothing can be found that can in the least comfort, rejoice or please man: but which contains everything that is evil and that causes pain and suffering. "Every pain will assail him," says holy Writ (Job xx.), that is, every suffering,

every pain that we can conceive and even more than we can conceive. No faculty of the mind, no power of the soul, is free from pain, suffering and torture. But these pains, sufferings and torture are much more dreadful than anything we can endure in this world. Imagine all you ever heard or read about the sufferings of persons afflicted with painful maladies, all the torments which evil-doers endure here on earth in punishment of their crimes, all the cruelties which tyrants have inflicted on thousands of holy martyrs; and then think that all this, according to the assurance of St. Chrysostom, is, in comparison with the torments of hell, a mere shadow. St. Augustine says, that our fire, as compared with the fire of hell, is as harmless as if it were only painted. Think at the same time that the reprobate are never, for one second, free from pain. Thus faith teaches us to regard hell. Consider it well, and think that your Guardian Angel says to you what was said to Landelin: "All this awaits you, if you do not change." Hence, the thoughts of the torments of hell should lead you to repent and do penance: the recollection of it should induce you to continue your penances, and should make them easy to you, as it is certain that all the inconveniences found in the exercise of penance are as nothing compared to the sufferings of hell. "There," says Thomas à Kempis, "will one single hour of pain be harder to endure, than a hundred years of the most rigid penance in this world."

NINETEENTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. JULIANA FALCONIERI, VIRGIN, AND ST. AQUILINA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

The Roman Martyrology, enlarged by Benedict XIV., announces to-day the festival of St. Juliana, in the following words: "At Florence, the memory of St. Juliana Falconieri, foundress of the order of Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary." Florence in Italy, is the place where St. Juliana was born, in 1270. Her parents were of the illustrious house of Falconieri, and were long without issue; until, at last, the fruit of many prayers, this holy daughter was given to them. It was looked upon as a sign of her future holiness, that Juliana, when an innocent child, pronounced the two blessed names of Jesus and Mary, without having been taught by any one to utter them. Even in her childhood, she endeavored so earnestly to attain Christian virtues, that her uncle, St. Alexius, of the Order of Servites, who was her instructor, hesitated not to say to her mother that she had not given birth to a mortal maiden, but to an Angel. And in truth, Juliana's conduct was such, that she resembled an angel rather than a human being. Never was it seen that she raised her eyes to look at the face of any man, much less that she ever regarded the other sex with boldness. Her horror of sin was innate, so that she trembled when she only heard the name of it, nay, she was seen to sink to the ground, as one dead, when a crime was only mentioned. Regardless of her temporal wealth, and of many advantageous offers of marriage, she made a vow, in presence of St. Philip Beniti, by which she consecrated her virginity to God, when she was not yet fifteen years of age. She was the first of her sex who entered the Order of the Servites. Many of the highest nobility followed her example. Juliana prescribed certain rules for them, in the composition of which she showed extraordinary wisdom and holiness. Hence she is justly recognized and honored as the foundress of the Sisterhood of the Servants of Mary.

St. Philip Beniti, who not only enlarged the order of the Servites, but also guided those who belonged to it in a most exemplary manner, was so thoroughly convinced of the virtues of Juliana, that he said, before his death, that there was no one more fit to be entrusted with the government of the whole Order—men as well as women—than Juliana. She, however, had quite a different opinion of herself, and although she was appointed to guide others, she performed, with the utmost

willingness, the most menial services for those under her. She was so deeply devoted to prayer, that she continued whole days in this exercise, during which time she often fell into ecstasies, and was favored with divine apparitions. The time unoccupied by work and prayer, she usually spent in reconciling hostile minds, for which kind office she was peculiarly qualified; and also in converting sinners, many of whom her persuasions brought to the knowledge of their faults; or in nursing the sick, to whom she was devoted with a mother's love. Anxious to conquer herself, she more than once sucked the putrid matter from the ulcers of the sick; and God, in consideration of such heroic self-abnegation, instantly restored them to health.

She was as severe to herself as she was tender towards others. The rest, which she took at night on the bare floor, was very short; as she occupied the greater part of the night in prayer. She chastised her innocent body with scourges and chains of wire. She fasted every Saturday on water and bread. Two days of every week she lived almost without earthly nourishment, as she then received the bread of angels, the Blessed Eucharist. On other days, she partook of food, but only of very little, and that of the most ordinary kind, as otherwise she refused to touch it. This continual rigor eventually impaired her health and caused her most severe pains which at last, in the 70th year of her age, ended her life. She had suffered, in this manner, for many years, with the most cheerful and edifying patience. Only one thing pained her exceedingly in her last days: which was, that, as she could not retain any food, the priest could not give her the Blessed Sacrament, for which she longed so ardently. Flying for refuge to God, she prayed that He would not permit her to die without this great consolation. Soon after, as if convinced that God would bestow upon her an extraordinary grace, she requested the priest to bring the holy Eucharist, at least to her room and hold it to her breast. The priest consented to her request, but no sooner had the Blessed Sacrament been placed near her breast, than it suddenly disappeared; and at the same time the countenance of Juliana expressed a great interior satisfaction and happiness. Whilst the priest strove to recover from his surprise, the servant of God, miraculously fed with the bread of life, expired without a struggle. After her death, they found on the left side of her breast, the form of the Host, bearing the image of the crucified Saviour, like a seal pressed into the flesh. This led to the belief that the holy virgin had been, in an unprecedented way, comforted in her last hour with the Blessed Eucharist. The fame of this miracle, and of many others with which God honored her

after her death, won for Juliana the esteem of the whole Christian world. Her holy body was buried in the magnificent Church which her father had built in honor of the Blessed Virgin and in memory of the Annunciation.



The Catholic Church also commemorates in this month the Virgin and Martyr, St. Aquilina. She was born at Biblus in Palestine, and was the only child of pious parents. When hardly a year old, she lost her father, and her mother consequently redoubled the watchful care with which she guarded her education. She had not reached her tenth year, when she manifested a most remarkable modesty in all her words and actions, particularly with those of the other sex that were of her own age. It is almost incredible that, at so tender an age, she already endeavored to bring others to the knowledge of Christ. She sought the society of the young heathen maidens to instil into their hearts contempt towards their false gods. "Oh!" said she, "what benefit have you of your gods, who can neither see, hear, nor assist you in the least?" "Who then is thy God?" asked they in return. Aquilina answered: "The God whom I worship, is the only true God, who has created heaven and earth, and who has the power to make me eternally happy." Such discourse she held with her equals. The mothers of the children also sometimes listened to her words, and, improving the opportunity, they questioned her in regard to the Christian faith. These questions the little maiden answered with great ability, thus disseminating truth, as it led many, first to consider what they had heard, and then to request of a priest better instruction, which was followed by their receiving holy baptism. For two years, the holy virgin exercised her zeal in this manner, when, one day, it reached the ear of the pagan Governor Volusianus. He immediately had her brought before him, and asked if it was she who dared to despise the gods of the land and who prevented others from sacrificing to them; and further if she were not aware of the imperial order in force, by which he was compelled to torture all those who worshipped Christ? Aquilina answered with such undaunted fortitude, that the enraged Governor ordered her to be severely struck on the face. After this, he had the upper part of her body bared and most cruelly scourged. All this, instead of frightening her, increased the courage of the maiden, who was only twelve years old; and when the tyrant said that he would give her a few days to consider, she answered: "You need not give me one moment to consider; I have already done

so. I shall worship no other God but the God of the Christians, in whose power it is to make me happy, but who, one day, will surely punish you in His just wrath." Volusianus, inflamed with rage, ordered red-hot awls to be forced into her ears, and this torture to be continued until she was dead. While suffering this terrible martyrdom, the Christian heroine cried to God for grace and strength, and soon sank upon the ground in a deep swoon. Believing her dead, the Governor commanded that she should be left there, that she might be torn to pieces and devoured by dogs. In the night however, an angel appeared to her and told her to arise and end her battle courageously. Miraculously cured by the angel, she presented herself again on the following morning, before Volusianus, and once more declared that she never would worship any other God but the God of the Christians. Volusianus not willing to try other tortures on her, ordered her to be beheaded; which was accordingly done.

The above narrated events took place in the reign of Diocletian, whose cruelty towards the Christians is sufficiently made known in the Lives of the Saints.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Juliana had, in her last sickness, the most intense desire to receive holy communion. How agreeable this was to the Almighty, He made manifest by the miracle related in her life. It is a great favor when, before we depart from this life, we worthily receive the Blessed Eucharist; as it imparts peculiar strength against the temptations of the devil. The Christians of olden times were wont to strengthen themselves, by receiving holy Communion, before they were led to be tortured, in order to oppose the tyrants fearlessly, and to suffer the impending martyrdom with heroism. At present, we have more to fight against the Evil One than against tyrants, and if we have not to suffer martyrdom, we still are tormented by anguish and sorrow. The holy Communion is most efficacious in imparting strength and

endurance. Pray to-day, and pray frequently that the Almighty may not permit you to die without having devoutly received this Bread of Life. To become more worthy of this grace, endeavor, while you enjoy health, to receive Holy Communion often and with due reverence and purity. It is our duty to entertain a fervent desire to do so. If our faith in the presence of Christ is deeply rooted, our desire, our longing after him will be fervent: and the more fervent it is, the more graces we may promise ourselves to receive through the Holy Communion. The words of the Divine Mother will also in this instance become true: "He has filled the hungry with good things." (Luke i.) "Hence let us advance with ardent desire and receive the holy body of our crucified Lord," says St. John of Damascus.

II. St. Aquilina was exceedingly modest in all her words and actions, particularly in her intercourse with those of the other sex that were of her own age. A similar modesty was observed in St. Juliana, who never boldly raised her eyes to the face of a man. May you also endeavor to be modest in all your words and actions, particularly when you are in society. I cannot request of you never to raise your eyes to the faces of others; but guard yourself against long or bold looks at others; as this is the road that has led many to great vices. Among others, the pious King David experienced the truth of this; as he would not have committed such grievous wrong, if he had kept his eyes under better control. "He opened his eyes out of curiosity, and was wounded by the arrow of impure love," writes St. Chrysostom, and then adds: "This should be heard and well pondered by all who imprudently gaze at the beauty of others." Hence Job made a covenant with his eyes, that in order not to be led by them into great sin, he would keep them under his control, and not

permit them to rest upon the figure of an unknown stranger. And why this? His words are as follows: "I made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin. For what part should God above have in me?" (Job xxix.) The holy man had decided not to turn his eyes upon a person of the other sex, as he knew that this easily awakens wicked thoughts and evil desires and deeds, so that God would have no more part in him. If you desire to keep the horrible and dangerous vice of impurity far from you, make a covenant with your eyes, and to effect this the more easily, forget not the above memorable words of Job, with which he testifies that God has no more part in him who has become a prey to this vice. Such people soon lose all devotion; all fear of the Almighty and all faith. God has no more part in them. They are the entire property of the devil. Is it possible that a human being can believe this and yet become the slave of so horrible a vice? Can it be that he will not carefully avoid everything that may lead him into its chains?

TWENTIETH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. SILVERIUS, POPE AND MARTYR, AND ST GERVASIUS AND ST. PROTASIIUS, MARTYRS

St. Silverius, born in Campania was, after the death of the holy pope Agapitus, chosen as his successor. Before and after he had attained this high dignity, he led an unexceptionable life and made himself famous during his reign on account of the undaunted courage which he displayed, even at the risk of his life, in opposing the enemies of the true Church. The following event will serve to illustrate this.

Agapitus, his predecessor, had removed Anthimus, Bishop of Constantinople, because the latter protected the Eutychian

heresy. Theodora, the wicked empress, who favored this heresy, desired to reinstate the Bishop in his See; but Agapitus could not be persuaded to consent. After his death, Vigilius, a Roman deacon, went to the Empress and promised her to assist Anthimus in regaining his lost dignity, if she would aid him to the pontificate. The Empress, greatly rejoiced, sent Vigilius with a letter to her General, Belisarius, commanding him to do all in his power to further Vigilius' wishes. Belisarius promised to act in accordance with the command of the Empress, as soon as he should have conquered Rome. When, however, Vigilius learned that Silverius had already been elected Pope, and was recognized as such, he returned to Constantinople, and informed the Empress of this fact. Wishing first to ascertain whether the new Pope was willing or not to consent to her request, she wrote to him and demanded that he should restore Anthimus, and also some other Bishops, whom the late Pope had removed from their Sees, and that he should annul the Council of Chaledon, by which the Eutychian heresy had been condemned; threatening him that if he refused to comply with her wishes, she would depose him from the chair of St. Peter. Silverius, however, answered with apostolic firmness, that he neither could nor would consent to the unjust demands of the Empress; and that he would much rather lose his life, than deviate, in the least, from the decision, of the Council. Theodora, in her wrath at this answer, commanded Belisarius to drive Pope Silverius into banishment, and to place Vigilius upon the Papal chair. Belisarius, fearing the displeasure of the Empress, was willing to fulfil her command, but wished, nevertheless, to have a tangible pretext. Antonia, his crafty wife, knew how to procure him this. She bribed some wicked men to write a letter, and testify that it was written by Silverius to the Goths, inviting them to come to Rome, and promising to deliver the city into their hands. Belisarius was aware of the forgery, but in order to obey the Empress, he summoned Silverius into his presence, showed him the letter, and accused him of treason. Without awaiting his answer, he divested the Pontiff of his robes, clothed him in the habit of a monk, and after having driven him out of the city, placed Vigilius upon the Papal chair.

All Catholics were horrified, and at the same time, deeply grieved at the deed. Silverius, however, rejoiced; for he was suffering for protecting the Church.

When he had arrived at Patara, the place of his banishment, the Bishop of the city, in compassion for the unjustly banished Pope, went to Constantinople, and so emphatically represented to the Emperor, Justinian, the wrong done, that he commanded

Silverius to be immediately sent back to Rome ; but in case he should be found guilty of treason, to forbid him the city. Vigilius, the unlawful Pope, with the aid of Belisarius, prevented the return of Silverius. They had some people lying in wait for him, who seized him on the road to Rome, took him on board of a ship, and landed him upon a small island, called Palmaria. The sufferings of the Saint in this place are indescribable. He wrote in a letter, among other things : " My food is the bread of sorrow and the water of anxiety : but I have not resigned my functions, and I never will consent so to do." This determination he manifested by deeds ; for he assembled the bishops, and excommunicated Vigilius and all those who had assisted him, and issued many excellent decrees for the improvement of morals and the reform of abuses. He was spared neither miseries nor persecutions ; but he was not to be persuaded to revoke or change anything that he or his predecessors had prescribed for the welfare of the Church ; although it was intimated to him, that by so doing, he would regain not only his liberty, but also the undisputed possession of the Papal chair. Never was he heard to utter a word of complaint, although his sufferings were so great : on the contrary, in all his adversity, he praised the Almighty and adored His impenetrable, but just decrees.

After long and great suffering, he ended his life on the island, after having governed the Church for three years and several months. Of Belisarius it is recorded, that repenting of his fault, he, to leave to posterity a visible token of his repentance, caused a church to be erected in Rome. God, however, permitted him to fall into disgrace at the imperial Court, so that he was not only dispossessed of all his wealth, but also brutally deprived of his sight, and at last brought to such distress that he was compelled to beg his bread. Vigilius came also to the knowledge of his error, and having repented of it, changed his conduct so effectually, that he became a zealous protector of the faith ; and in the discharge of his papal duty, he hesitated not to excommunicate the Empress Theodora.



To the life of the holy Pope and martyr Silverius, we will add what St. Ambrose relates of the two martyrs, Gervasius and Protasius, whose festival was celebrated yesterday. These two Saints were brothers, born in Milan. Their father was St. Vitalis, who shed his blood for Christ : their mother St. Valeria, who also received the crown of martyrdom. By the death of their parents, they came into the possession of great wealth, which

they divided among the poor and their servants; keeping for themselves only a small dwelling-place. During ten years they zealously served God, occupying their time in prayer, devout reading and other good works. Their edifying life and constant endeavors to convert others to the true faith, awakened the hatred of the pagans against them. When, therefore, the heathen count Astasius entered Milan, with the imperial army, to fight against the Marcomanni, several idolatrous priests went to him, saying: "If you desire to return victorious, first compel the two brothers, Gervasius and Protasius, to sacrifice to our gods, who, seeing themselves despised by these two, are so angry, that they refuse to speak." Astasius immediately had the two brothers seized and chained, and when they were brought before him, he said to them: "I give you warning to refrain in future from every disrespectful expression towards our gods, and advise you to be present at our sacrifices, in order not to deprive my arms of a blessing against my enemies." "The blessing of thy arms, and thy success in battle depends only on Almighty God, who dwells in heaven," said St. Gervasius; "of Him must thou implore it, and not of your deaf and dumb gods, who have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, tongues and speak not, bodies, but no souls, no life." These fearless words of the Saint enraged Astasius to such a degree, that he immediately had him scourged to death. After this, he turned to St. Protasius and said: "Wilt thou, miserable man, end thy life in as violent a manner as thy brother, or hast thou made up thy mind to something better?" "Who is miserable?" asked Protasius, "I, who do not fear thee, or thou, who fearest me, because thou art anxious lest thou shouldst be unfortunate, if I do not sacrifice to thy gods? If thou wert not possessed by this fear, thou wouldst not persuade me to sacrifice. I, however, fear neither thee nor thy gods, and will worship only the one true God who reigns in heaven." Astasius knew nothing to reply, but inflamed with wrath, commanded the brave confessor of Christ to be most barbarously whipped and afterwards beheaded.

The bodies of the holy Martyrs remained in the place, where, for Christ's sake, they had sacrificed their lives. During the night, however, Philip, a zealous Christian, with his son, laid them both in coffins and buried them secretly. The place of their burial was unknown until the time of St. Ambrose. God revealed to this holy Bishop where the relics could be found, at the same time admonishing him to exhume them. Accordingly St. Ambrose, with a great many bishops, priests, and laymen, went to the place indicated to him. He himself assisted in removing the earth, until, at last, the tomb was discovered and opened. In the coffins they found the bodies entirely uncorrupted, and

beside them a scroll of parchment, upon which their names and the events of their martyrdom were written by Philip himself. The relics were at first placed in the Church of St. Fausta, but later in the Ambrosian Church. St. Augustine, who was then at Milan, relates in his books, among other miracles, one which he witnessed. An inhabitant of Milan, who had been entirely blind for several years, heard the shouts and rejoicings of the people when the relics were brought into the city, and asked the cause of this joy. Being informed of it, he begged to be led towards the coffins in which the relics reposed, so that he might piously touch them. They complied with his request, and no sooner had he touched them, than his eyesight was restored to him. St. Ambrose relates this miracle and adds, that although it took place in the presence of a great many persons, yet the Arians dared to deny it. The heretics of to-day are like those ancient Arians.

The above related facts strongly testify to many articles of the Catholic faith, as will easily be perceived. They also clearly manifest that holy relics were already honored in the first Christian centuries; at the time when the Protestants themselves say that the Catholic Church was the true Church. How dare any one reject it now, or declare it fallen from the truth?

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The holy Pope Silverius is innocently accused of a great crime, expelled from the papal chair and sent into banishment, where he remains in suffering till his death. Theodora, however, the wicked Empress, lives long and in great honors, enjoys peacefully the pleasures of the world, possesses the imperial crown and reigns undisturbed. What was, however, the end of each, and how are they now placed in Eternity? St. Silverius died in exile, but thence, went into his heavenly home, where, for his patience and constancy, he received an eternal reward, which he will evermore enjoy. Theodora, on the contrary, was excommunicated by the successor of St. Silverius, and thus banished from the Catholic Church. Soon after, she died most miserably, without being, so far as it is known, reconciled with God and the true Church; from which we can only conclude that she received her deserved punishment in hell, which will never cease. Learn from this, how the patient suffering of a servant of God, and also how the temporal happiness of the wicked end. Learn from it, further, that you may consider yourself happy, if you, while diligently seeking to serve God, endure great suffering. Your suffering will soon end, and you will be recompensed by a happy eternity, if, like St. Silverius, you bear your trials patiently. Most unhappy, however, are those who, while they have nothing to suffer, but live surrounded by honors, and all the pleasures that wealth can give, lead a wicked life; for this temporal hap-

pinness soon passes away, leaving them nothing but an eternity of misery. Hence, St. Augustine says rightly: "Nothing is more unhappy than the happiness of sinners; for it strengthens them in their wickedness and leads them towards hell." "It is a foreboding of evil, when a sinner's days are never clouded," writes St. Bonaventure. "The sinners who are not punished by God in this world, sink deepest into everlasting destruction," says St. Gregory." Hence, envy not the temporal happiness of the wicked," writes St. Peter Damian, "but pity them because they are fattened like animals, to be led to the slaughter. Suffer patiently, if you have trials, and esteem it a good sign. God, by this means, will make you eternally happy in heaven.

II. The two holy martyrs, Gervasius and Protasius, might have avoided torture and death, and have gained the favor of the imperial officer, if they had complied with his sinful demands. Just so might St. Silverius have escaped from all his misery, gained the good will of the Empress, re-ascended the papal chair, and retained the undisturbed possession of it, if he had conceded the unjust wishes of Theodora. But

these Saints rather suffer pain and ignominy, than commit sin by such consent. How beautiful an example for you! Never ought you to consent to anything which others—whoever they may be—ask of you, if it is sinful: although you might obtain great favors by so doing; when, on the other hand, by refusing, you suffer great temporal damage. Why? Because you displease God and harm yourself much more by the sin you commit while consenting. Pilate, the unjust judge, may serve as an example of this. He consented to the demand of the Jews, and sentenced Christ to die, because he feared to lose the favor of the Emperor and to make himself unhappy. By this he committed great wrong, lost the favor of God, and afterwards that of the Emperor, making himself unhappy on earth and in eternity. May you always fear more the displeasure of God than that of man! Seek much more to avoid eternal than temporal injury, "Let us rather seek the favor and grace of God, than the favor and grace of men," says St. Chrysostom. "There is nothing more hurtful than sin," writes St. Rupert.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF JUNE.

ST. ALOYSIUS GONZAGA, CONFESSOR, OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

The angelical youth, Aloysius, was the son of a Margrave, and was born at Castiglione, in Italy, in the year 1568. As his mother, Martha, was in great danger of losing her life in childbirth, he was baptized before he was entirely born and thus fitted for heaven before earth had possessed him. After his mother, however, had made a vow to devote herself with her child at Loretto to the Blessed Virgin, she brought Aloysius happily into the world. No sooner had he begun to speak and walk, than

his noble mother instilled into him those religious sentiments with which her whole heart was filled. He had hardly reached the age of five years, when he was frequently found kneeling in a corner and devoutly praying. It was at this tender age that he went to Casale, where, by the wish of his father, Ferdinand, he was present at a large mustering of soldiers. He there stealthily took some powder out of the pocket of a soldier, and fired off a cannon, which very nearly cost him his life, as he might easily have been crushed by the recoiling wheels. At that time, he learned also, from associating with the soldiers, certain profane expressions which he repeated without comprehending their meaning. When his tutor heard these words and forbade him ever to use them again, they never more passed his lips. These two faults were the greatest he ever committed, and in the innocence of his heart, he never ceased to weep over them. At seven years of age, he turned his heart entirely from the world and gave it to God. He called this year the period of his conversion, and said afterwards that he then began to love God above everything, as every human creature ought to do after having attained the use of reason.

When eight years old, his father sent him with his younger brother, accompanied by a tutor, to the Court of the Duke of Tuscany. The pure life he had led in his father's house and which he continued to lead at Florence, procured him the name of an innocent Angel. In this city he made his first confession with such deep compunction that he swooned away on entering the confessional. From Florence he went to Mantua and thence returned to Castiglione. The celebrated St. Charles Borromeo travelling through this latter place and becoming acquainted with St. Aloysius, admired the special gifts with which God had graced him and prepared him for his first holy Communion, after which he administered the same to him. How carefully the Saint prepared himself and with how many tears of fervent piety he received the divine food, words have no power to express. From that moment the Saint evinced an angelic devotion and reverence towards the most holy Sacrament. He always prepared himself during three days for its reception, and after it, spent as many in humble thanksgiving. After a few years he was sent to the Spanish Court at Madrid, as page to the Prince James. One day, as the Prince was standing by an open window and the wind blew roughly in his face, he exclaimed: "Wind, I command thee to cease incommoding me thus!" Aloysius, who was near him, very wisely remarked: "Your royal highness may command men and they must obey; but God, to whom the greatest monarchs of the earth are subject, has kept the power over the elements to

Himself." This wise and christian speech caused the youth to be highly loved and esteemed by the king. When Aloysius had attained his 15th year, he earnestly took counsel with God and his conscience as to his future vocation. During his sojourn at Florence he had already resolved to retire from the world, but was as yet undecided in what manner he would serve God. After long and fervent prayer, he conceived great inclination towards the society of Jesus, not only because this order was new and in its first fervor, but also because of its offering such opportunities to work for the salvation of souls, and even to sacrifice life itself among the heathens in the service of God. On the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, he received from heaven the assurance that this inclination came from God ; for, after having devoutly received holy Communion, he thought he heard these emphatic words from the Divine Mother: "Join the society of my Son, and make known your resolution to your confessor." Aloysius, full of joy, informed his confessor, then his mother, and lastly his father, of the will of heaven as to his vocation. His mother cheerfully consented, but his father refused him and, for three years, left nothing undone to change his son's determination. But the latter remained firm in his resolution to obey the voice of God. Remarkable is the answer he gave to those who endeavored, by description of temporal honors, pleasures and wealth, to persuade him not to enter the priesthood. "What does all this contribute to gain eternal life?" he would ask after such representations, in order to show that in choosing and entering on a course of life, we must, above all things, be mindful of the end and aim of our being, which is to serve God and gain heaven. Two circumstances at length induced his father to give his consent: one was the sight of his son scourging himself until the blood ran, whilst he implored the Almighty to change his father's heart; the other was the firmness with which the innocent youth, one day, addressed to him the following words: "God calls me, I must obey Him. You, my dear father, oppose the Most High Himself when you oppose my following my vocation."

Hence, his father consented, although with tearful eyes; and Aloysius, returning thanks to God, resigned the marquisate to his brother, went to Rome and requested the Father General, Claudius Aquaviva, to receive him into the society of Jesus. He was immediately accepted, as there had already been sufficient proofs of his vocation, and thus he entered the novitiate in the 18th year of his age. How happy he was, and how zealous from the first day to the last, words fail to describe. The lessons of his office in the Roman Breviary testify that, even during his novitiate, he was looked upon as a model of virtue. He never

transgressed a single rule, and there was no virtue of a perfect religious which he did not practise. Every one particularly admired the humility with which he performed the most menial work, his perfect obedience and poverty, his heroic self-abnegation, his seraphic love of God, and his tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. Wonderful examples of these virtues are to be found in his circumstantial biography. We will only add a few words upon his happy death.

When, in 1591, Rome was ravaged by a terrible pestilence, Aloysius requested permission to nurse the sick, and having obtained it, he was indefatigable in his kind solicitude for them. He begged bread and other necessities for them, made their beds, administered their medicine and food, and carried many, who, seized by the epidemic, were lying in the street, into the hospital. In a word, he left nothing undone that Christian charity could require in such circumstances. At last, the disease laid its hold on him and confined him to his bed. On the eighth day, his sickness changed into a fever, from which he suffered for three months. All this time he spent in meditations on the passion of Christ, in devout discourses and aspirations, and in reading pious books. An impatient word never passed his lips. The most nauseous medicines which they gave him he swallowed slowly, so as to mortify his taste. They requested him to make a vow in order that the Almighty might grant the prolongation of his life; but he answered: "It is better to be dissolved." When they informed him of his approaching end, which had already been revealed to him by God, he exulted with joy, and requested them to intone the *Te Deum*, and exclaimed, in the words of the Psalmist: "I have rejoiced in what has been told to me; we shall enter into the house of the Lord."

To more than one who came to see him, he exclaimed: "We go, we go exulting." When they asked him, "Whither?" he answered: "To heaven, to heaven!" During the last three days he almost constantly kept the crucifix pressed to his heart, and the rosary in his hand. Sometimes, gazing upon his Saviour, he shed tears of love and devotion. One day he desired to be laid on the other side, but when they reminded him of the hard cross of Christ, he looked at the Crucifix and remained quiet. Shortly before his end, he bared his head, saying: "Christ died not with his head covered." At length, on the Octave of Corpus Christi, he gave his innocent soul, adorned with so many virtues, into the hands of his Creator, holding the crucifix, the rosary and a blessed candle in his hands. The last words he uttered were the holy names of Jesus and Mary. His happy death took place in the year 1591, in the 24th year of his age, and in the sixth year after his entering the Society of Jesus.

Benedict XIII., who, in 1726, canonized Aloysius, calls him a model of innocence and purity. The great Bellarmin, who was his confessor, testified that God had graced this holy youth with especial and almost unprecedented gifts. These were : first, that though he lived at so many courts, and having such frequent opportunities, among people devoted only to pleasure, yet he never stained the robe of his baptismal innocence, not only by a mortal sin, but even by the smallest venial sin : secondly, that he remained always free from all impure thoughts or desires : thirdly, that distractions during prayers were almost unknown to him, for he said himself, that all his distractions, for many months, would not equal the time it would take to say an Ave Maria. Truly, these were great and extraordinary graces of God !

Not less eminent were his virtues. Besides those above related, the following shone in his life like so many brilliant stars : his love to God and man, his angelical innocence and purity, and austerity towards himself, quite unusual for one of his years. No sooner had he commenced to know God, which was at the age of seven, than he immediately began to love Him from the bottom of his heart. His love constantly increased. At the mere mention of the Almighty, his whole face was overspread with fire, and his heart began to beat as if it would burst. He was frequently found in ecstasies during his prayer. He was constantly united with God, and as it was feared that his fervent devotion would weaken his health, his Superiors ordered him sometimes forcibly to detach his thoughts from God. But this cost him more pain than it costs us to turn ours heavenwards. Eager to obey, he sometimes cried : " O Lord, leave me ! " but it was useless—he remained united to God and God remained in him. A consequence of his love for the Almighty was his love towards men. This he evinced particularly in nursing those stricken down with the pestilence, as is above related. He often desired to preach the Gospel to the heathen, not only to gain souls for life eternal, but also to give his life for Christ and men. While only a boy, he already instructed his younger brothers and the servants in the doctrines of the Christian faith, and by his pious discourses and admonitions, persuaded many to lead a better life. Wherever he found an opportunity, he endeavored to assist his neighbor in temporal or spiritual matters.

But how shall I describe his innocence, his angelical purity ? He hated and avoided even the least shadow of sin ; shunned, as much as possible, all dangerous occasions, and carefully guarded himself in order to remain pure and innocent. At a game of forfeits, he was once requested to kiss at least the shadow of a young lady ; but he was not to be persuaded, and never again

took part in similar games. Just so he acted when he was desired to dance, and was never present at nightly entertainments or theatrical performances. Even while he was at court, he avoided as much as possible all such vain amusements, and, hiding himself in his room, he occupied the time in prayer and devout reading. These edifying employments constituted his greatest enjoyment from his tenderest youth. With what reverence and piety he worshipped the Most High, especially when at Church, is made known by the fact, that all those who saw him pray, attest that he looked more like an angel than a human being. His senses, particularly his eyes, he kept under such strict control, that he never turned them upon strangers. For nearly two years and six months he was page to the Crown-prince at the Spanish Court, and had to appear daily before the queen; and yet he knew her not by sight. He avoided all intercourse with the other sex, even of his relatives and friends. He was therefore called a human being without flesh, or an angel in the flesh. It is most certain that, in this manner, he kept his innocence unimpaired.

His constant mortification, and the austere penances which he practised contributed greatly to this. His whole life shows that it was his constant care to control himself and mortify his delicate and innocent body. He fasted three days of every week on water and bread, and at other times, he partook of so little that it might justly be said that his whole life was a continual fast. As at first he possessed no hair-shirt or chain to wear around his loins, he used instead of them his spurs. When his mother requested him to sleep no longer upon the bare floor as he was wont to do, but to use the soft bed prepared for him, he placed pieces of wood under the bed-clothes and so took a short rest. He scourged himself daily, not only once but several times. When one day they showed his mother the linen which he had used to wipe off the blood, and she begged him, with tears in her eyes, not to be so cruel to himself, he said: "O let me atone for my sins by such slight penances." And what sins? He meant those two faults which he committed before he was seven years old, when he, as will be recollected, took some powder from a soldier, and repeated a few profane words without understanding their meaning. This was only the shadow of a sin and yet he repented of it daily through his whole life. During his last sickness, he recited every day the Seven Penitential Psalms, or had them read aloud to him. He was unwearied in the practice of penances after he had entered upon a religious life, and even requested in his last illness the permission to scourge himself, or because he was too weak to do it himself, to be scourged by another.

Whoever considers all this and much more that is related of this Saint, will readily understand the exclamation uttered by Saint Magdalen of Pazzi, at Florence, when in an ecstasy she saw the glory of the Saint in heaven: "Oh! what great glory Aloysius, the son of Ignatius, enjoys! I could never have believed it, had not my Jesus shown it to me. There seems hardly to be in heaven a greater glory than his. Hence I say, Aloysius is a great Saint. I wish that I could wander through the whole world and cry that Aloysius, the son of Ignatius, is a great Saint. He was a hidden martyr Oh! how overwhelmingly did he love God here on earth; therefore he now enjoys the full love of the Almighty in heaven!" The Almighty Himself, to this hour, gives most certain proofs of the holiness and glory of the Saint, by many and great miracles. In 1756, a book was printed at Augsburg, in which a hundred miracles were related which had taken place, during 30 years, in Italy and Germany; all of which had been examined and approved by the ecclesiastical authorities. Many books could be filled with the miracles that have been wrought throughout Christendom by the intercession of this holy youth. Hence they act very wisely, who, in mental or physical suffering, fly for refuge to St. Aloysius.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The life of St. Aloysius contains very much that will serve as a lesson and model: and it is my wish that you should yourself select some point in which especially to imitate him. Take, for example, his love of prayer and pious reading: his reverence and recollection during prayer: his devotion to Jesus and Mary: his careful preparation for holy Communion: his constancy in what he felt to be his vocation: his horror of the smallest sin: his deep repentance for trifling faults: his unceasing self-immolation. The special feature of the life of this Saint is the unusual union of innocence with the spirit of austerity and penance. Never did this Saint tarnish his innocence by a mortal sin, nay, not even by a wilful venial sin; and yet his penances were such as the greatest sinner upon earth would not sur-

pass. What have you to say to this? Does it not bring the blush of shame to your cheek, when you consider how often and how grievously you have sinned, without ever thinking of doing penance? Do you not feel impelled to follow the example of this holy penitent? At least to some degree yield to this impulse, and set to work immediately. To this end, beg the intercession of St. Aloysius; for, he himself has said, that, if we desire to obtain some virtue from God, we should ask the intercession of those Saints who were distinguished for the practice of that virtue.

II. So much in general of the example of this Saint. I will now offer two distinct points for your especial consideration.

1. St. Aloysius was no friend of games and dances, of theatrical per-

formances, of unnecessary association with the opposite sex, and of all amusements generally. And why? Because he was a friend of purity, and most earnestly desired to gain salvation. Hence he desired to flee from everything which seemed to be in the least dangerous to him. If in our day, any one were to act in this manner, he would be laughed at as scrupulous, or considered a silly person, who was out of place on this earth. But I am very certain that if the world possessed more of these scrupulous and silly persons, heaven would one day be more populous and hell would have fewer unhappy victims. Such scrupulous persons may be out of place here on earth, but they will surely be in their right place in heaven. Those, however, who, on account of very different conduct, are—according to the judgment of the worldlings—very suitable for this world, will probably be just as suitable for hell, and not at all fit for heaven. If you love purity and earnestly desire to save your soul, avoid even the smallest shadow of sin. Abstain from all those worldly amusements which you have reason to judge may lead you to commit sin. The game of forfeits, which in itself is no sinful game, and which may be played without the least wrong, is, in our days, scarcely ever played without seriously offending God. Knowing this, how can you play it without committing sin? Aloysius knew not at first the danger, but being once aware of it, nothing

could induce him to play again. Why do you not make the same resolution? Let others laugh at you on account of it: it will do you as little harm as it did St. Aloysius. But it will contribute much to your salvation if you do not allow it to disturb you.

2. After they had represented to him the honors, pleasures and riches of this world, St. Aloysius said: "How does it all assist us to gain life everlasting?" Remember these words always. Do nothing that may prevent you from obtaining eternal life, but cling eagerly to everything that may assist you to gain it. In all your affairs, all your actions, let it be your first consideration to see whether or not they are leading you to heaven; after this, judge what you may do and what you must avoid. In this manner, you will constantly keep the end and aim of your life before you, which is needful to every one who would go to heaven; for, whoever thinks of it seldom, is in great danger of never arriving there. And what will avail temporal honor, pleasure and enjoyment, if we are eternally unhappy at last? What would it benefit Saint Aloysius now to have had all the enjoyment they represented to him, if he had not earnestly aspired to gain the end and aim of his creation, eternal life? "For what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xxvi.)

TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF JUNE.

ST. PAULINUS, BISHOP OF NOLA.

St. Paulinus, who, on account of his great learning and eloquence, but still more on account of his virtues, is highly praised by St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Jerome and St. Gregory, was a native of Bordeaux, in the province of Gascony. His parents, who were Romans, and very rich and of ancient nobility, desired that their son should be as eminent for intelligence and knowledge, as he was on account of his birth and fortune. Their desire was fulfilled; for, when Paulinus had reached the age of manhood, he was not only honored and admired by everyone, but was chosen Prefect and Governor of Rome, and gained great fame for the wisdom of his administration. The pious Paulinus, however, soon became tired of all worldly honors and pleasures, and having resigned his office, he went to Barcelona in Spain, to serve God without disturbance. Having remained there for some time, he returned to Italy. At that time, St. Ambrose was bishop of Milan, and to him Paulinus applied for advice with regard to the change he intended to make in his life. Having received the Saint's directions, he went to Nola, in Campania, as he entertained special reverence towards St. Felix, priest and martyr, of that city. There he humbled himself so deeply, that for some time he occupied the office of sacristan. Afterwards he sold his estates, and having used a part of the money in building a Church at Fundi, he gave the remainder to the poor. He then proceeded to a little village in the neighborhood of Nola, changed his rich garments for humble clothing, and commenced to lead the life of a hermit in a poor little hut, deriving all his sustenance from alms.

But though Paulinus kept himself secluded, it yet became known who he was, and whence he came, and not only Nola, but all Italy was astonished, that so great and eminent a man had chosen for his walk through life such an humble, and, in the eyes of the world, such a despised path. The esteem in which he was then held by both clergy and laity was so great, that, on the death of the bishop of Nola, they determined to raise him to the Episcopal chair. It was long before the humble servant of God could be persuaded to accept the dignity, but having at last consented, his love, his solicitude for his flock, the zeal he displayed for the honor of God, made him beloved by men and favored by the Almighty. Soon after his election to the See, Campania suffered the fate of many other

countries, and was laid waste by the Goths, and many of its inhabitants were taken prisoners. The holy Bishop used all his income to feed the poor and ransom the captives. When all his resources were exhausted, Nola was plundered and the great servant of the Almighty, with several others, was taken prisoner. God, however, so ordained that he was speedily released. Some years afterwards, the Vandals crossed the ocean, and, again plundering the Kingdom of Naples, took away many of the inhabitants as prisoners. Among these were several persons from Nola, and although St. Paulinus exerted himself to the utmost to redeem them from prison, he was unable to help all.

This extremity gave the holy Bishop an opportunity for an act of charity which had never before been witnessed in the world. St. Gregory himself relates the event as follows: A poor widow coming to the Saint complained with bitter tears that her only son, who was all the support she had, was taken prisoner, and begged him not to refuse her the money she needed for his ransom. The Saint, deeply affected, answered: "My dear daughter, I have not anything left; but to ransom your son I will sell myself. I will go with you and you must say that you give me instead of your son, in order that he may return to you." The widow, unspeakably surprised at the Saint's offer, hesitated to accept it; but Paulinus knew how to overcome her remonstrances, and at last persuaded her to consent to his plan. He travelled with her to Africa, where her son had already arrived, and the Saint, clad in the garment of a slave, was exchanged for the widow's son, the latter being set at liberty. Paulinus was charged with the care of a garden, as he said that he was able to perform that work, and God blessed his endeavors in such a manner, that everything grew most wonderfully under his hands. A near relative of the king, who was a great lover of horticulture came frequently into the garden, and speaking with the new gardener, soon observed that he was more than an ordinary laborer. Paulinus one day whispered to him in a prophetic spirit: "Have a care for the future. Thy king will soon be a corpse. Act in time, and take all proper measures in the affairs of the Crown." The gentleman, greatly terrified at this speech, informed the king of it, who desired to see Paulinus. Fear bedewed the king's face with great drops of sweat when the Saint appeared before him; for, he had had a dream in the night in which it appeared to him that he stood before the divine judgment-seat, and heard the sentence: "The scourge given to him shall again be taken from his hands." Among the judges, the king said he had seen the

man now standing before him. After this he gave orders to inquire into the history of this gardener. At first, Paulinus would not confess who he was, but as they insisted on knowing, and he thought it might promote the honor of God, he revealed his name and also how he had become a slave. The king, admiring his virtue, immediately gave him his liberty, and told him he would grant him any favor he might ask. The Saint requested the liberation of all the captives from Nola, which the king granted without any hesitation. Hence all the prisoners from Nola were assembled at court, and being liberated, they returned with the holy bishop, whom they justly regarded and honored as their deliverer. How the whole city rejoiced when the Saint arrived there accompanied by so many long lost friends! All the inhabitants went out to meet him, and having given him due thanks for his love and goodness, they led him with great honors and rejoicings to his Episcopal chair, whence he exhorted them to give thanks to the Almighty for the grace bestowed on them, and to serve Him fervently and with unwearied zeal in future.

After this he continued his pastoral functions until sickness confined him to his bed. Two bishops from the neighborhood visited him at this time, and having an altar erected in his room, he for the last time said Holy Mass. When this was accomplished, he lay down again and asked where his brothers were? A servant, supposing that St. Paulinus was speaking of the two above-mentioned bishops, replied: "They are here, dear father." The Saint, however, said: "Not so: those, whom I mean, are the two bishops, Januarius and Martin, who were with me, and who promised to come soon again." Januarius had formerly been bishop at Naples, Martin at Tours: both were famous on account of their holiness. They appeared to the Saint and cheered him in his suffering, and thus he expired happily in the Lord, in the year 431. The holy Fathers Jerome, Gregory, and Ambrose in their works, bestow high praise on the great learning as well as the virtues of this Saint. St. Augustine, in his record of him, relates among other events, that when St. Paulinus had been taken prisoner, he said to the Almighty: "Lord, release my heart from all anxiety for gold and silver, as Thou knowest best where I have placed my treasures." St. Augustine remarks that the holy man had already sent all that had been his, according to the admonition of our Lord, to heaven, through the hands of the poor.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Paulinus gave all he possessed to ransom prisoners, and when nothing was left him, he gave himself to redeem the son of a poor widow. He voluntarily became a slave to give liberty to another. This was surely as admirable an example of charity as the world has ever witnessed. The contemplation of this love should recall to you the infinitely greater love which the Son of God has manifested to us, by ransoming us from the much harder captivity of the Evil Spirit. "He loved me, and delivered himself for me." (Gal. ii.) And to what did He give Himself? Not only to a disgraceful captivity, to a painful scourging and crown of thorns, but to the most ignominious and bitter death upon the cross. And why? "For His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us:" answers St. Paul. (Eph. ii.) And what do you owe to your Saviour in consideration of such unbounded love? If you had been the prisoner whom St. Paulinus ransomed with his own liberty how would you have acted towards him? Oh! then let the same spirit animate you towards Him who has paid so much higher a ransom to free your soul from captivity. "My soul, love him who has so dearly loved thee," says St. Augustine.

II. St. Paulinus occupied himself, during the time of his voluntary captivity, as industriously in his humble work in the garden, as he had formerly done in preaching and other ecclesiastical labors. He lived as virtuously when a gardener as he had lived when a bishop. He gained from God just as much grace, perhaps more, by his toil in the garden as he had gained by his episcopal cares. It is immaterial what we work at, or where, or in what station we may be. What is important is, that we perform rightly, with the purest and holiest motives, the work which, according to the place we occupy in life, we are called upon to do. A husbandman, by his ploughing and sowing—an artisan, by his daily labor,—a servant-girl, by her housework,—can earn the same merit from God, as a priest, by reciting the divine office, visiting the sick, hearing confessions, or similar good works. A soldier, a citizen, a beggar, may live just as piously as a religious in his monastery, or a hermit in the desert. Hence every one ought to be contented with his station in life, and take care to perform his task well and with the best intentions; further, to avoid sin and endeavor to do as much good as he can, and to bear his trials patiently. "Let every man abide in the same calling in which he was called," (I. Cor. vii.) says St. Paul; and again: "I beseech you that you walk worthily of the vocation in which you are called." (Eph. iv.) "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." (I. Cor. iii.)

TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF JUNE.

ST EBERHARD, BISHOP OF SALZBURG.

The holy bishop Eberhard was born of rich and virtuous parents in the 11th Century, at Nuremberg, a well known city in Bavaria. His father was Count Hipolstein, and his mother, constantly occupied in praying, fasting, and giving alms, was as much renowned for her piety as for her high lineage. They had built a beautiful church upon their estate in honor of the Blessed Virgin. The first few stones for the edifice they themselves carried to the place where the building was to be erected, out of devotion to the Queen of Heaven. They were very anxious to lead Eberhard, from his tenderest youth, in the path of virtue, and later they sent him to Bamberg to school. Young as he was at that period, he was earnest and retiring in all his actions. After having studied the liberal arts, he received a canonry in the Chapter. But when he thought more deeply of the dangers to which he was subject, he sought betimes to escape them, and repaired to the Benedictine Monastery of Mount Michael, requesting to be admitted among the religious. But the joy which he experienced at entering was of short duration, as the canons of the Chapter coming after him, took him almost forcibly away. He was then sent with a tutor to France, not so much for studying theology, as to make him forget the Convent life. The pious youth was there exposed to many temptations to lose his innocence and purity, but he knew how to guard himself in such a manner that he returned as chaste and guiltless as he had left. He had in no wise lost his former desire to enter the religious state, and had no sooner arrived in Bamberg, than he humbly requested of the holy bishop Otto, as also of the canons, the permission to follow his vocation. The latter were long opposed to it, but as Eberhard persevered in his request, they at length gave their consent, and he immediately went into the Monastery of Pruefling, near Regensburg on the Danube. Great as was the zeal manifested by Eberhard on first entering the monastery, his constancy never failed; for, he had made the firm resolve to serve the Almighty until the end of his life.

Whilst St. Eberhard was in this monastery, his two brothers, Conrad and Erbo, with his sister Bertha, built two large Convents at Bibourg between Ingolstadt and Regensburg, defraying all the expenses out of their own means. One Convent was for men, the other for Virgins. When the first of these buildings

was finished, they desired that Eberhard, their brother, should govern it as Abbot. The humble servant of God, however, refused most earnestly to accede to their wishes, although the religious, living in the new monastery, joined his brothers in their request. At last, however, they were enabled to obtain his consent. The holy bishop Otto at that time made a pilgrimage to Rome, taking Eberhard, of whose virtues he had sufficient proof, as companion. At Rome, the bishop, according to a promise he had made to the religious at Bibourg, requested the holy Father to make Eberhard Abbot of the new monastery; which was accordingly done, the Pope himself ordaining the Saint. After his return from Rome, Eberhard discharged his new functions with so much wisdom, modesty, and fatherly solicitude, that he won the hearts of all under him and disposed them to obedience. Towards himself he was extremely severe in fasting, watching, and other works of penance, while towards others, like all the Saints, he was tender, charitable and liberal. He once, on account of important business, went to Rome, accompanied by another priest. When in Switzerland, they met a poor woman, who, on account of feebleness, was unable to continue on her way. The Saint immediately dismounted, and placing the woman upon his horse, not only took her to the place of her destination, but also gave her abundant alms.

During twelve years the holy Abbot governed his religious to their great satisfaction and benefit, but when, in 1147, the See of Salzburg became vacant by the death of Bishop Conrad, Eberhard was chosen as his successor. Hardly had he been informed of this, when greatly frightened, he secretly fled. Searching everywhere for him, they found him at last, and brought him almost like a prisoner to Salzburg, where he was received with great rejoicings and placed upon the Episcopal throne. The higher he was raised above others, the more he humbled himself. His income was used only to beautify the Church and to comfort the indigent. He frequently visited the hospital and the huts of the poor or sick, whom he always assisted with liberal alms, exhorting them to bear their crosses with Christian patience. He one day met a leper who desired to receive holy communion. The holy bishop himself went and administered it to him, as others, horrified at the sight of the man, refused to go near him. The leper died before his eyes, leaving a feeling of inexpressible consolation in the heart of the bishop. The austerity with which he had treated his body while in the monastery, he continued as bishop. Many a night he spent in church, lying on his face, watching and praying. He never tasted choice meats, his diet being always the ordinary food of the convent.

He refused to be present at entertainments: his duties were more pleasing to him than any recreation. This, however, caused him to be beloved both by God and man. The Almighty gave him the grace to work miracles, so that he healed many sick, and released many possessed by the devil, by making over them the sign of the Holy Cross. To those who were in fear by reason of great temptations, he restored peace and comfort by a few words.

To his greatest credit, besides the above, is the following fact. The Emperor Frederic strove, with all his power, to uphold a false Pope in opposition to the lawful one, and endeavored, as well by menaces as promises, to bring all the bishops to his side. Eberhard, however, was not to be moved, but remained faithful to the true pope, though he was aware that by so doing he incurred the displeasure of the Emperor. The Emperor convoked a council and summoned all the bishops of Germany to be present at it, forcing them by severe threats to become followers of the false pope. Eberhard appeared not at the council, as he looked upon it as unlawful; but going to Rome, he threw himself at the feet of the true pope, and took the oath of allegiance. This oath he kept with unwavering fidelity and took care that all those in his charge should follow his example. Many and cruel were the persecutions he had to suffer on account of it, but he remained steadfast, repeating frequently: "I would rather have the Emperor as an enemy, than God."

After having governed his see most praiseworthily during 18 years, he died in the year 1164, in the Cistercian Monastery of Rein, whither he had gone on business. Shortly before his death, a pious nun, in an ecstasy, saw a magnificent throne in heaven, by the side of which stood St. Peter and St. Rupert. Upon her asking to whom this throne belonged, her guardian Angel replied: "This is the throne of the Archbishop of Salzburg, and it awaits his coming, which is nigh." A monk, also, in an ecstasy, during the night in which the Saint died, saw the Blessed Virgin most kindly welcoming some one to heaven. He desired to know who it was, and the divine Mother answered: "This is my son Eberhard, who out of love to me never refused any one what he asked, in my name." The holy body was brought to Salzburg and buried with imposing ceremonies. His tomb soon became renowned on account of the many miracles which God wrought there on the blind, the lame, the possessed, and other unfortunate people.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "I would rather have the Emperor as my enemy, than God." This was the determination of St. Eberhard. Just so should you think; for, it is better, a thousand times better, that you should have all men as your enemies, than the Almighty. The displeasure of God is far more hurtful to you than the displeasure of men; and on the contrary the favor of God can benefit you more than the goodwill of all men. But do you know how to obtain the favor of the Almighty? St. Chrysostom answers: "Sin separates us from God and makes Him our enemy." Avoiding sin and keeping the commandments of God makes Him our friend, as is distinctly told us in these words of Christ: "You are my friends, if you do the things I command you." (John xv.) Pay attention: "If you commit a sin, to please any one, or because it is the will of any one who has the power to harm or to benefit you, you prove that you would rather have God for your enemy than men, and that you esteem the good-will of man more than the favor of the Most High. Is that acting as a reasonable being? You surely cannot have the heart to answer this question in the affirmative. You would consider him a fool who would rather offend his king, than one of the lowest subjects. You would be much more senseless if, to please men, you offended the Lord of the Universe, and thus rather have God than man for your enemy. And how often have you already been guilty of such incomprehensible folly! Commence to-day to weep over it; and make the resolution to guard against it in future. Never offend God to please one of His creatures. Never leave undone, out of love to a human be-

ing, what God commands you to do. Never do, out of regard to men, what the Ruler of earth and heaven has commanded you not to do. Seek more to obtain the favor of God than that of men. If you have reason to fear that, on account of your sins, you have incurred the displeasure of God, rest not until, by a contrite confession, you have regained His grace. And having done so, endeavor to retain it by strictly keeping His commandments and by zealously practising good works.

II. A magnificent throne was prepared in heaven for St. Eberhard, in consideration of his many virtues and the good deeds which the holy bishop practised until his end. Can you expect such a throne, or even a dwelling in heaven? "In my father's house,"—that is, in heaven, says Christ, "are many mansions." (John xiv.) Will you one day inhabit one of them? This depends only on yourself; because, on the part of God, everything is done to secure it. Follow St. Eberhard in the exercise of Christian virtue as much as your station in life will permit you; and most certainly you will one day possess a mansion in heaven. I have already told you elsewhere, that man, by good deeds, builds himself a house in the happy eternity, and by sin, vice and evil deeds, a dwelling in the unhappy eternity. This truth Holy Writ teaches us, as often as it says, that our reward will be in accordance with our works. "God will render to every man according to his works," writes St. Paul. "To them indeed who according to patience in good works, seek glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life: but to them that are contentious and who obey not the truth, but give credit to iniquity, wrath and indignation." (Rom. ii.)

TWENTY FOURTH DAY OF JUNE.

THE NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN, THE BAPTIST.

In the holy Gospel, the nativity of St. John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of Christ, is described by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, not only for our instruction, but also that we may rejoice in the Lord our God. In the mountains of Judæa, at Hebron, eight miles from Jerusalem, lived Zachary and Elizabeth. They were just people, and lived in accordance with the commandments of God, but had no children, although they had prayed for them many years. The great age which they had attained, naturally gave them no longer any hope of issue. But still they continued their prayer. One day, when Zachary, who was a priest, offered incense in the Temple at Jerusalem, he saw at the right side of the altar, an angel, whose appearance filled the pious old man with fear and trembling. The angel, however, said to him: "Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard. Elizabeth, thy wife, shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. He shall bring thee joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice in his nativity. He shall be great before the Lord and shall drink no strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. He shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God: and he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias: that he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people." Zachary listened with great astonishment: the angel's promise seemed to him to be out of the course of nature. Hence, he said: "Whereby shall I know this? For, I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." The angel answered: "I am Gabriel, who stand before God, and I am sent to speak to thee and bring thee these good tidings. And behold, thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time." After this the angel disappeared, and Zachary, mute from that hour, returned home after he had discharged his priestly functions.

The words of the Archangel Gabriel came to pass. Elizabeth conceived and gave praise and thanks to God that He had removed from her the disgrace of being barren. Six months later, the Most High sent the angel Gabriel to the blessed Virgin, at Nazareth, to announce to her that she should become

the mother of the long expected Messiah. He at the same time informed her that her cousin Elizabeth, although she was old and barren, had conceived a son, as to God nothing was impossible. After Mary had resigned herself with deep humility to the will of the Almighty, and become the mother of the Son of God, she went into the mountains of Judæa, to the house of Elizabeth and Zachary. She did not go to see if the angel's words in regard to Elizabeth were true, but to congratulate her happy cousin, and render her such services as she would need. The Gospel assures us that when the Virgin Mother entered the dwelling of Zachary and greeted Elizabeth, John, the yet unborn child, leaped for joy in his mother's womb, as soon as Mary's words of salutation reached Elizabeth's ear, and Elizabeth herself was filled with the Holy Ghost. This leaping of the unborn Saint, was, according to the holy fathers, a sign that John, by special favor of the Almighty, knew the Saviour, yet concealed from the eyes of the world, and rejoicing in His presence, adored Him. Hence they teach that John was at that moment cleansed from original sin and filled with the Holy Ghost, and thus fulfilled the words of the angel and was sanctified in the womb of his mother.

At length came the time when he was to see the light of day, and Elizabeth gave birth to him whom the angel had promised and prophesied. When the neighbors and relatives heard how gracious God had been to Elizabeth, they all went to see her and congratulate her. On the eighth day the child was circumcised according to the law. As children, on this occasion, received a name, the relatives wished to give him that of his father, but Elizabeth opposed it, saying: "John is his name!" "But there is none among thy kindred that is called by this name," said her friends. Elizabeth, however, remained inflexible. Turning to the still mute Zachary, they desired to know how he would have him called. Zachary asked for a writing-table and wrote; "John is his name." And at the same time his speech returned, and filled with the Holy Ghost, he gave thanks to God in the beautiful hymn which is one of the daily prayers of the Church, and begins: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and wrought the redemption of his people." All those present marvelled at these events, praised God, and spread among the people all that they had heard and seen, and concluded from it that the new-born child was destined to be great among them. Hence they said to each other: "What do you think shall this child be? for the hand of the Lord is with him."

Thus writes St. Luke, in his gospel, of the nativity of St. John, and then adds that, "he grew and was strengthened in spirit;"

and was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel, by his preaching and baptizing.

Several holy fathers write that Elizabeth fled with her child into the desert, to conceal herself from the cruelties of king Herod; and that John was nourished and kept either by an angel or in some other manner by divine Providence. Others write that, in his third or at most in his fifth year, he had voluntarily gone into the desert, eager to serve God more perfectly and to prepare himself for his mission. No one ought to think this incredible; since, even before he was born, he was gifted with the use of his reason, and comprehended the great mission to which he was called by the Almighty. So much is certain that he was from his most tender years in the wilderness. The holy Evangelists and the holy fathers tell us what manner of life he led there. He subsisted on wild honey and locusts, which are used as food in the East; but he ate so little, that our Lord said of him, that he had neither taken food nor drink. His drink was water; his garments, a coat of camels'-hair, which was fastened round his loins by a leathern belt. The ground was his bed, and he employed day and night in prayer and meditation. By fasting and other austere penances, he prepared himself for his mission. St. Augustine remarks that the severe life of penance of John was the model after which the hermits regulated their lives; hence they acknowledge him as their founder.

When in his thirtieth year, St. John was admonished by God to leave the wilderness and commence his mission. Going to the river Jordan, he preached penance and baptized the penitents. This baptism was not that which Christ instituted in the course of time: neither had it the power which the baptism of Christ has; but was only a sign of penance. In the Gospel it is related how great a multitude of people came to St. John; what he preached; how he exhorted them to do penance: how he had the honor to baptize Christ Himself, and what occurred during this event. The splendid testimony is spoken of, which he gave at different times, to the effect that Christ was the true Messiah. It is also recorded what he answered to those who were sent to him to ask whether he was the promised Messiah; for, his life was so holy and wonderful, that many believed him to be the long promised Redeemer. The events of the latter part of the life of this Saint will be related in the chapter for the day on which the church commemorates his decapitation.

Among the writings of the holy Fathers we find many sermons which contain magnificent praises of the virtues of St. John, the Baptist. They call him an angel in the flesh; an apostle in his sermons; a miracle of penance; the first hermit who induced so

many thousands to imitate him; the first preacher of repentance, and proclaimer of the heavenly kingdom. They praise his fearlessness in reproofing vice, both in high and in low; his deep humility, by which he deemed himself not worthy to baptize Christ, or even to unloose the latchet of His shoes; his angelic purity; his continual penance and his unwearied zeal for the honor of God and the welfare of men. But what should inspire every one with the greatest reverence towards this Saint is the fact, that Christ our Lord Himself praised the greatness and holiness of St. John so frequently, and said that among men there had been none greater than John the Baptist. What more can be said in his praise?

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. At the time when the Divine Mother visited her holy cousin Elizabeth, the yet unborn John was cleansed from original sin and sanctified by the grace of the Almighty. What an inexpressibly great grace! You partook of the same after your birth, when you received holy baptism. You were at that time cleansed from the stain of original sin, and from a child of wrath became a child of God, a temple and a dwelling of the Holy Ghost, and obtained the right to eternal happiness. "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called and should be the sons of God;" writes the holy Apostle John (John iii.) Consider this unspeakably great favor which God in His mercy has shown to you, in preference to so many thousands. But have you ever made manifest to God your gratitude for this great mercy? Commence this day to offer your thanks to Him, and repeat them yearly on the day of your birth or of your baptism. Take heed that you turn not again to a child of wrath from a child of God, and that from a dwelling of the Holy Ghost you become not a habitation for the devil; and thus, by sin, forfeit the

claim you had on heaven. "By baptism, you have become a temple and a dwelling of the Holy Ghost," says St. Leo; "do not drive away so noble an inhabitant and become again a slave of the devil."

II. St. John kept the grace and innocence which he received in the womb of his mother unimpaired, and yet led a most austere life from his tenderest years until his end. How does it happen that you have such an aversion to all penances, as you certainly must know that you have long since lost the grace and innocence received in holy baptism? Why will you not mortify your body either by fasts or other acts of self-denial? Why do you persist in allowing yourself all that your body desires; and why do you avoid every thing that is in the least burdensome or hard for you? "John punished and mortified his innocent body so severely;" says St. Bernard, "and you desire to adorn your sinful body with silk and velvet, and nourish it with delicate food." How is this? How do you suppose you will be able to render an account of your doings to God? Truly, if we could save our souls as easily without all self-denial, by enjoy-

ing the pleasures of the world, and living in comfort and luxury, we might say that John did not act wisely in leading so severe a life. But who dares even think this of one who before he was born was already filled with the Holy Ghost? We act very unwisely if we flatter ourselves that, living so different a life, shall obtain a place in heaven near him. "Hence," says the above-cited holy teacher, "let us encourage ourselves to do penance," in consideration of the austere penances of St. John. "Let us stimulate ourselves to mortify our bodies, that we may escape the awful judgment of the living God."

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. FEBRONIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

Among many holy virgins who, during the persecution of the Christians by the tyrannical Emperor Diocletian, lost their lives by a glorious martyrdom for the faith of Christ, one of the most renowned is St. Febronia, whose death is this day commemorated in the Roman calendar of Saints. She was educated from her third year at Sibapolis, a city in Syria, in an institute where forty-nine other virgins led an edifying and pious life under the care of a Superior. Brienna, at that period Superior, was a cousin of St. Febronia, and was especially solicitous to direct her in the path of virtue and piety. After remaining in this institute during several years, her relatives desired her to return into the world; but Febronia, being of unusual beauty, feared its dangers and preferred to continue with her cousin, shut out from all temptation. She hoped, by severe fasting, long prayers, and other penances, to lose her personal beauty, so as not to delight the eyes of others, or give herself opportunities to sin. But the more she mortified her body, the more her beauty increased. Hence, to preserve her purity, she consecrated her virginity by vow to Christ, whom, as her bridegroom, she endeavored to serve most faithfully.

When she had reached her nineteenth year, the news arrived that Lysimachus and Selenus, two deputies of the Emperor Diocletian, were, by his command, on their way to exterminate the whole of Christendom. Many, ecclesiastics as well as laymen, endeavored to save their lives by flight. Brienna, the wise superior, gave to those in her charge the liberty to go, adding, however, that she was determined to remain, hoping to end her life as a martyr. Her only anxiety was what would become of her dear Febronia. "What will become of me?" said the latter; "I shall remain here under the protection of my heavenly bride-

groom and His virgin mother. With His grace, nothing will be impossible to me. To Him, to whom I gave my heart, I will also give my life. If I am weak, I have the confidence that my God will strengthen me." This she said with so much determination and, at the same time, so cheerfully, that all her companions, looking at her with astonishment, resolved to follow her example.

Not long afterwards some soldiers of Selenus came to the dwelling of the pious virgins, forcibly opened the door, and called all the occupants together. Each one of them desired to die for Christ's sake, but Febronia wished to be the first, and begged the rough soldiers to let her begin the martyrdom. This request astonished the men to such a degree, that they did not continue their cruelties according to their orders, but leaving the house, they reported to Selenus all that had happened. When they informed him also that, among the virgins, was one of extraordinary beauty who had desired to die first, he gave orders that she should forthwith be brought before him. The soldiers, executing this order, chained Febronia and led her away: all the others desired to accompany her, but the soldiers would not permit it. Brienna the Superior, embraced her with deep pain and said to her: "Go, my child, and show yourself a worthy spouse of Christ. Let me have the consolation, in this life, to know that one of my relatives died a martyr." Her grief would not allow her to say more. Febronia replied bravely and cheerfully: "Fear not, dear Mother; I will remain faithful to my bridegroom. Nothing shall be able to separate me from him." Having said this, she departed with a cheerful countenance. Praising God on her way, she at the same time prayed Him to aid her with His strength and grace in the approaching struggle.

Selenus, on beholding her, was struck with her beauty. He asked her who she was, and whether a free or a bond-woman. The Saint replied: "I am a bond-woman of Jesus Christ, my God and Redeemer, to whom I have given myself from my childhood." "It is a great pity that thou hast allowed thyself to be so long deluded by the Christian sect. But dismiss thy error now; sacrifice to the gods of the land and I will give thee in marriage to a noble Roman" (he meant by this, Lysimachus, the son of his brother), "and make thee one of the first ladies of the Empire." Having said this, he ordered her chains to be taken off: but Febronia, holding fast to them, said: "I pray you, Sir, do not deprive me of the most beautiful ornament which I have ever worn. As far as the marriage is concerned of which you spoke, let me inform you that I am united to the greatest monarch of heaven and earth, and hence all the Lords of the world are not great enough for me. I am a Christian, I worship

only the true God, for whose sake I am ready to suffer more torments than you can invent. The idols of the land I will never worship, and I say beforehand that you will effect nothing, if you think to force me to it by suffering; for, I fear no pain or torments. The more you torture me, the greater will be the glory of my Lord Jesus Christ, and the greater also my victory." This fearless answer surprised Selenus, and all those present; but, recovering quickly, he ordered the brave confessor of Christ to be scourged with rods and clubs, and afterwards to be stretched on the rack, and her flesh to be torn with iron combs. The executioners performed the order with great cruelty; but could not weary the patience and perseverance of St. Febronia. She did not even utter a sigh during the martyrdom, but praised God with a loud voice. Her whole body was most fearfully torn and wounded, but she uttered no word of complaint, nor evinced the slightest feeling of pain. All the spectators of this fearful scene began to acknowledge the power of the God whom Febronia worshipped. Selenus alone stormed and raged in blind fury. That it might not appear that he was conquered by a feeble maiden, he ordered her, bleeding from numberless wounds, to be chained to an iron grate and thus to be slowly roasted. This order seemed to those present so terrible, and the execution of it so barbarous, that, although they had nothing to fear for themselves, most of them went away. Febronia alone remained fearless as before, giving praises and thanks to God. She declared openly that she considered it her greatest happiness to suffer for her Divine Bridegroom. The tyrant at length grew tired of her constancy, and seeing that he effected nothing by this torture, he had her taken from the grate and, after having had all her teeth knocked out one after another, he had both her breasts cut off from her wounded body. But what is the power of God unable to perform, even in the feeblest of His creatures? Febronia remained firm and quiet under this inhuman cruelty. She called on God to aid her, proclaimed and praised His Majesty, and showed her willingness to suffer yet more. Not a sign of fear or despondency did she manifest, during all these awful torments. Selenus, the tyrant, knew no other torments, and immediately gave orders to behead her. Thus this chaste virgin, this invincible Christian heroine ended her martyrdom and was received among those who follow the Lamb, and sing a canticle which others cannot sing, as St. John records in his Apocalypse. Selenus, the tyrant, lost his reason on the same day, and in his fury, struck his head against a stone pillar and sank dead upon the ground. Lysimachus, informed of this, said: "This alone was wanted to glorify the name of Christ and the victory of

Febronia." It is recorded that he was converted and embraced Christianity.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Febronia endeavored to lessen her natural beauty by austere fasting and other penance, in order not to delight the eyes of others. How do the vain children of the world relish this, and what say those women to it, who, by indecorous and immoderate ornaments, perhaps not at all suited to their station in life, and by all possible arts and wiles, try to attain what nature has refused to give them? They desire to appear beautiful before men; and why? To please the eye, to be praised and esteemed on account of their borrowed beauty, and perhaps even to entice others to forbidden love. But what will be the result of all this? A sensible man will conclude that these vain children of the world are not what they wish to appear; and although he may seem to admire them, in his heart he derides and despises them, because he sees that their beauty is a false, lying beauty, made by art and not by nature. Jezabel, the wicked queen, desiring to please Jehu, as holy Writ relates, painted her face, adorned herself most magnificently, and thus stood at the window where she might be seen by Jehu. But instead of pleasing him, she was thrown down, the hoofs of the horses trod upon her and the dogs lapped her blood. (IV. Kings xi.) May God save those painted and immodestly dressed dolls of the world from being cast into everlasting fire, a prey to hellish dogs and evil spirits. The ancient teachers of the church have surely, in their sermons and writings, declaimed indignantly enough against the fashions of painting the face and of

indecorous dresses. St. Cyprian writes emphatically: "The Evil Spirits are the inventors of it." St. Ambrose says: "God has created man, as far as his soul is concerned, after His own likeness, and has painted his body, so to speak, with natural colors. By painting the face man desires to better God's picture; hence he accuses the divine Artist of having made a fault, which cannot be done without offence." He adds, that God will one day say to this sort of people: "I neither recognize nor see my coloring: I neither recognize nor see my picture." "What nature gives us," says Tertullian, "is the work of God: what we are by painting, is the work of the Devil." St. Jerome says: "What is paint on a Christian face? How dare we raise such a face to heaven, which the Creator cannot recognize as His?" Much more on the same theme is to be found in the works of other holy Fathers; and whether they all have done wrong in speaking thus, I leave to others to decide. I myself will make only one remark. If a Christian woman desires to be truly beautiful and to please the eyes of God, as well as those of sensible men, let her strive after Christian virtues. They are the most beautiful paint and the most beautiful adornments for women. "Beauty is vanity," says the wise man, alluding to that beauty which is only external; but "the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." (Proverbs xxxi.) The fear of God and piety makes man beautiful and agreeable to the Most High. "Virtues," writes Saint Augustine, "are the

real adornments of Christian men and women; but not painting or immoderate splendor of garments." This should be well considered by all Christians, especially by parents, who ought not to omit impressing these and similar lessons on the minds of their children. Wo to those who, either by word or example, teach their daughters differently!

II. St. Febronia feared lest her beauty should lead others and herself into temptation. How much more reason to fear this have many indecorously decked children of the world; some of whom desire especially to please the eyes of men, or win their love by means of artificial beauty! Is not that a danger or an occasion of sin for themselves and others? If such women, by their indecorous dress, intend to incite others to unchaste love, they commit great sin, as St. Thomas and other theologians say. If they do not directly intend this, but do what they cannot but suppose must give scandal to others, or incite them to improprieties, they do not less wrong, because they give opportunities to sin. St. Chrysostom addresses such persons as follows: "How dare you suppose that you are free from sin? You have kindled the fire, sharpened the sword, poured out the poison. The deeds of the other are your work!" "You frivolously and impudently dressed woman," says St. Augustine, "you give to others the occasion of going into everlasting destruction; you hasten with them towards hell." "Do not tell me that you are pure-minded," writes St. Cyprian; "your

indecorous dress, your painted face tell the contrary: unchaste women alone decorate themselves in such a way." The same is said by St. Jerome, when he speaks of how impudent women paint their faces. "This," says he, "is a sign of interior depravity; and is to others a spark to kindle lust." The holy Fathers, however, did not condemn the magnificence of dress or ornaments, which was according to the station of people and decorous, but only what was frivolous, above the station or means of the wearer, or otherwise scandalous; for, it is known from holy Writ that the chaste Judith, and the pious Esther wore splendid garments, and used costly oils and fragrant spices; but their intention was holy and their manner of dressing both decorous and according to their station in life. In what the ornaments of Christian women ought principally to consist, the two apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, explain in the following words: "They"—the women—"shall adorn themselves with modesty and sobriety: not with plaited hair or gold or pearls, or costly attire: but as becometh women professing godliness, with good works." (I. Tim. ii.) "Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on apparel. But the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quiet and a meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God. For after this manner heretofore, the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands." Thus speaks St. Peter. (I. Peter iii.)

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF JUNE.

THE HOLY YOUTH, PELAGIUS, MARTYR, AND THE TWO HOLY BROTHERS PERGENTINUS AND LAURENTINUS, MARTYRS.

Among other renowned martyrs, this day presents a youth, or rather a boy, thirteen years old, who was an example of Christian heroism such as the world has very rarely, perhaps never seen. This is St. Pelagius, to whose memory many churches are dedicated in Spain.

When only ten years of age, he went with Ermogius, a bishop, who was his uncle, to battle against the Saracens. The Christians lost the battle and many thousands were killed or taken prisoners. Among the latter was the bishop, whom Abderaman, the king of the Moors, cast into prison at Cordova. The bishop offered for his release several captives whom he had taken, and also offered to leave his little nephew Pelagius as hostage until their arrival. When, however, their coming was delayed for some unknown reason, Pelagius was thrown into the same prison where the bishop had been. The innocent boy was naturally very quiet, modest and sensible, and not caring for idle amusement or childish plays, he occupied his mind in reading and praying. He encouraged himself to patience by reading devout books, and by prayer he sought to obtain from God the grace to bear his sufferings. Not only his fellow-prisoners, but also those who had charge of the prison, were surprised at the sensible conduct of the boy.

Three years had he been thus imprisoned, when, one day, at the royal table, some one spoke of the intelligent and handsome lad whom the bishop had left as hostage. The king was curious to see him and ordered him to be brought into his presence. His fine face and form prepossessed the king immediately in his favor, and he promised him great honors, riches and pleasures, if he would adopt the teachings of Mohammed. Pelagius was silent for some moments, as if considering the king's words; at length he said fearlessly; "I am a Christian; I have vowed fidelity to Christ, my Lord, and will not break it. All you promise me is empty and quickly passes away, but what my God promises is true and endures for ever. I cannot exchange eternity for temporal things." Although the king admired the fortitude of the boy, he was not pleased with his constancy in the Christian faith. He therefore tried to win him by flatter-

ies, took him in his arms and placed him on his knees, trying to kiss and caress him in an unbecoming manner. The holy boy, unwilling to suffer this, tore himself away from the king, saying, with more than manly freedom: "Leave me alone, and pollute not my mouth with impure kisses. You have not one of your effeminate heathens before you." Having said this, he hastily took off the magnificent garment in which they had clad him and threw it at the king's feet, as an unmistakable token that he would accept no temporal benefits from the king. Although greatly incensed by this action, the king regarded it as done in childish petulance, and gave orders to his servants to flatter and caress the child until he should be willing to renounce his faith. The servants strictly followed these orders, but without the least success. Pelagius only repeated what he had said to the king, that he would never break his faith to Christ. These words reported to the king changed his love for Pelagius into bitter hatred. He commanded the innocent boy to be thrown on the ground and his arms and legs stretched asunder until he should either expire or abandon the Christian faith. The torture was terrible, but the boy remained constant and fearless, and the king ordered him to be cut to pieces and thrown into the river. The executioners commenced to treat the harmless, innocent child so barbarously and so inhumanly that they resembled tigers rather than men. One held him by the arms, another by the feet, while a third cut his lips off, a fourth his nose, others his ears. Others did the same with other parts of his body, cutting here and there pieces of flesh away; on his feet they displayed the most horrible cruelty, cutting away one toe after another, and then with a pair of pincers tearing large pieces out of the calves of his legs, until at last they cut his feet entirely off. After this they tore the remaining flesh, piece by piece, from his body.

For six long hours this inhuman cruelty lasted: and the child, miraculously kept alive by the Almighty, uttered not one word of complaint, but only called on God for grace and aid; and thus amid prayers, ended his innocent life. When, towards the end of his martyrdom, he raised his eyes and his mutilated arms to heaven with the words: "O Lord! save me from the hands of my enemies!" one of the executioners cut off his arms, while another, with a stroke of his sword, severed his head from his mangled body. In this manner, St. Pelagius ended his more than cruel martyrdom and his guiltless life, in the year 925: or, according to others, in 926. His holy head and the other parts of his body, were, by the king's command, cast into the river; but the Christians sought them and buried the holy relics with great solemnity.



To the valiant youth and Christian hero, St. Pelagius, we will add two not less valiant and praiseworthy confessors of Christ, although they were neither so young nor suffered an equal martyrdom. These are the two holy brothers Pergentinus and Laurentinus. They lived at the time of the Emperor Decius, one of the most cruel persecutors of Christendom. At Aretinum in Italy, where they resided, the Governor was just as cruel to the Christians as the Emperor himself. A heathen informed him that two brothers, Pergentinus and Laurentinus, lived in the city, who were not only Christians, but had also seduced others to embrace their faith. Tiburtius, the Governor, ordered them immediately to be seized and brought into his presence. When the soldiers arrived at the house of the brothers, Pergentinus said: "Now begins our fight." Laurentinus replied: "Dear brother, we will now remember the admonitions of our Saviour, and not fear the tyrant who can only kill the body; but we will fear God who has power to condemn body and soul. We will not fear the torments with which men may torture us, because they will soon cease; but we will fear those torments which never end, but are to be endured eternally." In this manner they encouraged each other to endure with fortitude their approaching martyrdom. Tiburtius addressed them in the following words: "What have I heard of you? Is it really true that you have left our gods, and worship Christ, who died so ignominiously?" "Yes!" answered Laurentinus; "we worship Christ as the true God. Those whom you call gods are no gods; they can neither see, hear, nor help, nor recompense their servants." Tiburtius, although enraged at this answer, constrained his anger, because of the nobility of their family. Hence he dismissed them with the admonition to renounce their religion and not to induce any one else to embrace it; as otherwise, he would deal with them according to the Emperor's command. The brothers left him, giving thanks to God that He had vouchsafed to them the grace thus happily to overcome the first assault. Meanwhile, they prepared themselves by fasting, prayer and other good works, for the second, and foreseeing that this would not be far distant, they were very assiduous in their endeavors to win souls for heaven. God bestowed also upon them the grace to work miracles, which induced many of the heathens to embrace the Christian faith. Incensed at this, the idolatrous priests hastened to Tiburtius, and a second time denounced the two holy brothers, adding that by their magic they were exciting the whole city. Tiburtius calling them into

his presence, thus addressed them: "I have not only spared you out of compassion, but have also exhorted you, like a father, to forsake your faith. How then do you dare to despise my advice? Do you not desire to have the invincible Emperor or myself as your friend?" "We desire to have the true God as our friend," replied Pergentinus; "whether your Emperor or you are our friend or not is immaterial to us. We will not forsake our religion, nor worship your gods, even should you torment us in the most cruel manner." This courageous answer roused the fury of the Governor, and he gave immediate orders to hang the brothers in chains and scourge them. During this torture, they both called to God in the words of the Psalmist: "Preserve me, O Lord; for I put my trust in Thee!" Hardly had they cried thus, when the arms of their executioners were stiffened in such a manner that they could not move them, while at the same time they experienced the most excruciating pains in them. Hence they begged the Saints to pray to their God that He would relieve them of their pain and give them again the use of their limbs, promising henceforth to acknowledge Him as the only true God. Pergentinus and Laurentinus prayed, and their tormentors were instantly relieved from pain and regained the use of their arms. They therefore openly declared: "There is no other true God, except He whom these two brothers adore. Him we also acknowledge, and we despise all false gods!" Many of the heathens, who were present, abjured their errors in similar words. Tiburtius, fearing a general insurrection, had the two holy martyrs cast into a dungeon, with orders not to supply them with any nourishment whatever. Three days they thus spent, praying to God, and praising Him, when an angel brought them some food, with the command to partake of it. At the appearance of the angel, the whole prison became illuminated, which so frightened the guards that they sank on the ground as if dead. The servants of God thanked Him and refreshed themselves with the food which He had so graciously sent them. At the same time, Pergentina, a sister of the two Saints, arrived at the dungeon with some Christians to visit them and bring them some food. They found the door open and the guards lying senseless on the ground, but the martyrs happy and filled with heavenly comfort. "Come with us," said the visitors, "leave this dungeon, and we will conceal you, that you may serve God so much longer and instruct us." The Saints, however, replied: "Far be it from us to lose by flight the crown of martyrdom, which already we almost hold in our hands. But go and tell the priest Cornelius what has happened to us, that he, with the other faithful, may praise the Lord our God."

As soon as Tiburtius had learned the above related event, he again called the Saints into his presence and said to them in great wrath: "You seduce the whole city by your magic; either worship the great Jupiter this moment or you shall die a most painful death." "We are no magicians," replied Laurentinus "but servants of the Most High." "You may worship Jupiter," added Pergentinus, "but we pray only to the true God." The tyrant, enraged at these words, had the Saints tortured in manifold ways; but when he perceived that they became more and more encouraged, and converted many heathens by their fortitude, he found it expedient to end the scene and gave orders for the two Saints to be beheaded without delay. The Saints went rejoicing to the place of execution, and ended their glorious combat by the sword. Their last words were: "O Lord, our Protector, into Thy hands we commend our spirits."

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. The innocent youth, Pelagius, resisted with all his strength, the caresses of the unchaste king. If you value your chastity, if you wish to save your soul, follow his example. The world, as it is now, esteems caresses as jests or amusements; but can there be named a single saint or a man renowned for virtue who has judged in the same manner? The contrary is well known. St. Basil said, without hesitation, that with one single kiss, the poison of impurity may flow into all the veins of the body and contaminate the whole man; hence he admonishes us: "One must be just as guarded against a kiss, as against the bite of a poisonous snake: for, the poison infuses itself through the whole body." The thoughts of other Saints on this point have more than once been told to you. I wish to ask you now: whose judgment in this case is wrong; that of the frivolous world of our period, or that of the Saints? St. Pelagius, after the reasoning of the Saints, thought that his soul would be stained with kisses and such like caresses,

and that therefore he would commit sin by allowing them. May you also be convinced that we generally commit great sin by them, and prepare a way which leads to the most hideous vices and thence to hell. Many, many are in hell, the first cause of whose damnation was a single kiss. They would not have been damned if they, after the example of St. Pelagius, had resisted in the beginning. In consideration of this, tell me if we can reasonably look upon these things as a jest, an amusement, and regard them as innocent? Is it then only a jest to be precipitated into hell? I know well that if a priest or confessor says it is dangerous or sinful, he is derided and laughed at as too scrupulous. But will people speak in that manner, or have the same idea, when they are called to render an account before the Judgment-seat of the Most High?

II. The two holy brothers, Pergentinus and Laurentinus, suffered a most painful martyrdom: St. Pelagius one still more cruel. Both might have been avoided had these

Saints forsaken the true faith. But they suffered the most barbarous martyrdom, and death itself, rather than offend God by the sin which they would have committed by abandoning the true faith. What is your intention? If you were quite certain that directly after having committed sin, you would be tortured only for the space of a quarter of an hour, as those holy martyrs, tell me, would you commit the sin? Most assuredly not. The fear of such painful though short martyrdom would prevent you. But do you not know that you will have to suffer much greater pains, much more intolerable tortures, not for the short space of a quarter of an hour, but during eternity, if you should die immediately after having committed sin? How blind, how thoughtless, how foolish you must be, if nevertheless you do wrong! You are convinced that, the moment you commit a mortal sin, you put yourself in danger of being damned for ever, and you are not at all sure if it will be in your power to free yourself, by true repentance, from the danger. Ah! think of this appalling peril; think of an eternity in hell, when you are in temptation to

sin. Do not wantonly cast yourself into it. "Spare, I pray you, my brethren," cries St. Bernard; "spare your souls! spare the blood which has been shed for you! Guard yourselves from such terrible danger and endeavour to escape the fire which is prepared for you in hell." The thought of this danger, and still more of the fire in hell, is the means to strengthen man to fight valiantly in all temptations and not to leave God by committing sin.

"Never will a servant of the Lord, thinking of everlasting torment, succumb in the fight: never will he abandon his God" says the pious Thomas à Kempis; and many other holy fathers of the church teach the same. To confirm these words, take, besides other examples, that of the holy martyrs Pergentinus and Laurentinus. They were not conquered in their combat. And why not? They remembered the eternal torments of hell. "We fear," said they, "those torments that are perpetual and never end." If you fear the same and remember them, you will surely never be separated from your God by sin, and no temptation will be strong enough to overcome you.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. LADISLAS, KING OF HUNGARY, AND THE VENERABLE BEDE, CONFESSOR.

St. Ladislas, a son of King Bela of Hungary, and a grandson of St. Stephen, who was called the Apostle of Hungary, was born in Poland, where his father, on account of the persecution of King Peter, resided at that period. The education of Ladislas was carefully superintended by his mother, and its fruits were manifested in his later years. He came into posses-

sion of the throne after King Geisa, successor of King Solomon, who, on account of his cruelty and criminal deeds had been deprived of the crown. No sooner had the reins of government fallen into the hands of Ladislás then it became his first care to re-establish Christian morality among his people and to confirm the true faith. The shining example which he himself gave, contributed greatly to this, as he was ever the most zealous in adhering to all that the Christian faith teaches, and the most assiduous in practising the Christian virtues. He reigned with so much mildness and justice that his subjects loved him as a father and obeyed him cheerfully in everything. Solomon, the expelled King was not satisfied, and endeavoured to regain the crown by causing disturbances. When Ladislás perceived this, he sent him a message to the effect that he was ready, at any moment, to abdicate in his favor, if the Senate would give its consent. This rare and unprecedented offer made so deep an impression upon King Solomon's heart, that he promised to resign the rights that he still had, or believed he had, to King Ladislás, and to content himself with a pension. He, however, soon after, changed his mind, and desiring to get the reins of government once more into his own hands, he headed a conspiracy against Ladislás; but this was revealed to the King, and the faithless Solomon was taken prisoner. Ladislás, in his great clemency and charity, did not desire to keep him too long imprisoned; hence he set him at liberty and endeavored to win his graceless heart by kindness and change his disloyal disposition. But the more kind and liberal he showed himself towards Solomon, the more wicked the latter became, and at last he even incited the King of the wild Huns to take up arms against Ladislás. He himself led a band of these barbarians against the King of Hungary, but being defeated, was obliged to seek safety in flight.

After Ladislás had, in this manner, restored peace in his dominions, he convoked a council, consisting of Prelates of the Church, the nobility and the principal citizens. In this they made many wholesome laws by which the people were henceforth to regulate their conduct. These in a short time restored throughout the entire kingdom the brightness of Christian piety and harmony. But whilst the pious King endeavored to further the honor of God and the well-being of his subjects, several of the neighboring princes made war against him. Ladislás, who was an enemy to all bloodshed, made offers of peace to them; but when they haughtily refused them he took the field and won a glorious victory, thus proving himself not only a pious King but also a valiant general. In truth his life bears witness that he conquered as often as he took up arms against his enemies. He subdued the

rebellious Bohemians and drove away the Huns, who ravaged Hungary, and forced them to sue for peace. He took Cracow, the Capital of Poland, and humbled both the Poles and the Russians, who had sided with his enemies. Dalmatia and Croatia he wrested again from the barbarians, defeated the Tartars and conquered a part of Bulgaria and Russia.

Although occupied with so many wars, he omitted not to further the honor of God by erecting several churches and by disseminating the true faith. He always evinced peculiar reverence for all that was consecrated to the service of the Most High. His devotion and deep humility at church were truly edifying, and no day passed in which he was not found on bended knees present at Holy Mass. His most cherished occupations were prayer and the discharge of his royal duties. He daily gave audience to his subjects, listened to their complaints; and no one left him without being comforted. At table he exercised the most admirable self-denial. He fasted several times during the week, besides the days appointed by the Church. He generally took a short rest on the bare ground, and mortified his body as though he lived in a monastery. He esteemed chastity so highly, that he could never be induced to cement the welfare of his kingdom by an advantageous marriage, and determined to carry his virginal innocence unstained to the grave. Towards the poor he was not only liberal, but almost extravagant, and it became a common saying that the King of Hungary could do nothing but build hospitals and churches and give charity to the poor. He showed, however, in the field, that he could do more. Before he went to battle against an enemy, he issued an order for a three days' fast and public prayers, and was an example to all of the strict observance of both. Therefore it is no wonder that he was victorious, and was guarded by the heavenly host, as several times during battle angels were seen by his side. The holy King often desired that he might give his life for the love and honor of Christ, and the best opportunity for this seemed to him to be the holy war, for which, at that time, the entire Christian world was in arms to free the Holy Land from the power of the Saracens. Ladislas was requested by the Kings of Spain, France and England, and by other princes, to become Commander-in-chief of the entire Christian army. He readily consented, as the end and aim of the war was holy, and only intended to further the honor of God. But whilst he was preparing himself for it, God, impenetrable in His decrees, sent him a severe illness, of which, after having devoutly received the Holy Sacraments, he peacefully died. He was thus received into the heavenly Jerusalem by the King of kings, at the time when he

thought of conquering the earthly Jerusalem by the strength of the Christian arms. His holy death took place in the year 1096. The holy relics were buried, with great solemnity, in the magnificent church which he had erected at Waradin, in honor of the Queen of Heaven. A special reason for his being interred there was the fact, that the holy King had always evinced great devotion to the Divine Mother. The many and great miracles with which God honored the tomb of this Saint, show how powerful his intercession is with the Lord.



To-day also the Church celebrates the festival of the Venerable Bede, of whom we will say a few words. This holy man was born in England, in the County of Northumberland, in the village of Girvum or Jarrow. At seven years of age he was sent into a Benedictine monastery to be there instructed in virtue and knowledge. He became so eminent in both, that already during his youth he was regarded as a Saint, and received the surname of Venerable; while, on account of his marvellous knowledge, he was esteemed the most learned man of his time. The many works which he left are incontestible evidence of his extensive erudition. He was employed day and night in prayer, reading and writing. He could never be persuaded to seek recreation beyond the walls of the monastery, or to go and breathe the air; every moment was too precious to him to lose, as he said, in idle amusement. The books he wrote were filled with heavenly wisdom, and spread his fame far and wide; he however, was deeply humble and treating all with gentle kindness, edified every one by his virtuous life.

The Pope commanded him to come to Rome, in order to make use of his knowledge and wisdom in important affairs of the Church; but the servant of God made so many excuses to decline this honorable call, that he at length received permission to remain in his monastery and employ the rest of his days in writing for the benefit of the whole Church. In this useful manner he passed the greater part of his life, which terminated in a happy death when he was 62, or, as some say 70 years of age. His last sickness seized him after Easter, in the year 735, and he expired on the festival of the Ascension of our Lord. Even when ill, he would not omit going into the Choir, or teaching, or writing. The words of the Apostle were frequently on his lips: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." He found consolation, however, in his latter days, in the words of Holy Writ: "God punishes each son whom he accepts." He foretold by prophetic inspiration, the great misery which the

Christian world would suffer from savage nations in punishment for sin. On Ascension day he manifested an intense desire to enter heaven with Christ; and the Almighty lent a gracious ear to his longing. After having received, with great devotion, the holy sacraments, he began the well-known verse: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;" and while singing it, he gave up his soul to Him who had created it for the benefit of many and to His own glory.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. St. Ladislas was always victorious over his enemies because he endeavored most earnestly to obtain heaven's assistance by praying, fasting and other good works. After this he fearlessly attacked his enemies. You also have, in life and in death, to battle against the spirits of hell, those cruel enemies of your soul, who attack you most violently with their temptations. If you desire to conquer them, you must seek to obtain divine aid by the same means which the holy king employed. Before all things, pray and beg God to strengthen you in your contest with your enemy. "If we are in temptation, let us take refuge in prayer, as little children, when they are frightened, take refuge in the lap of their mother," says St. Chrysostom. And our Saviour admonished His disciples in the following words: "Watch ye and pray, that ye fall not into temptation." (Matt. xxvi.) After this, attack your enemies without leaving them time to disturb you; that is, resist from the commencement, as soon as you are tempted. "As soon as the Evil One begins to inspire you with wicked thoughts, and to tempt you, drive him away; resist without hesitation, before complacency and finally consent follow:" writes St. Augustine. If you show yourself afraid, the Evil One will attack you so much the more violently. And what rea-

son have you to be afraid? As strong as the devil seems to be, the words of St. Bernard still remain true: "Our enemy is weak, he can conquer only those who are willing to be conquered. He can tempt you, but it depends on you to consent or not."

II. The holy King Ladislas was burdened with wars and affairs of state, and yet allowed no day to pass without assisting at holy Mass, and praying at certain hours. I scarcely believe that you have to attend to more or more important business than this king. How is it then that you so frequently neglect Mass, on the pretext that you have not time? How is it, that, during the day, you think so little of prayer? You find time to eat and drink and sleep; time for amusements, for visits and idle conversations; not to attend holy Mass and to say your prayers. And when you sometimes go to Mass, or say your prayers, why is it not done with due piety and reverence? Ladislas, a great king of the world, prayed on bended knees, because he was aware that God is an infinitely greater Lord and King than he was. Do you not know the same? Why then do you not bend your knees before the great Ruler of heaven and earth? "For it is written:" says St. Paul, "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every

tongue shall confess to God." (Rom. xiv.) If you do not follow this command, what benefit can you expect from your prayers? "The King is present;" says St. Chrysostom: "the holy angels are present; and you stand impudently upright while they are near! How can you hope for help? how appease God's wrath?" It is not required of you to kneel constantly at your prayers; but before the Blessed Eucharist and at certain parts of holy Mass

you are expected to bend your knees.

From the life of the venerable Bede you should draw the lesson that you ought sometimes to remember the two verses which he so frequently pronounced: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" and, "God punishes each son accepted by Him." The former will awaken in you a wholesome fear of God: the latter will comfort you in your suffering.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. IRENÆUS, BISHOP AND MARTYR, AND ST. BENNO, BISHOP OF MEISSEN.

St. Irenæus, one of the earliest and most renowned Fathers of the Church, was born in Asia, and placed under the charge of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, a disciple of St. John, the Evangelist. Under this holy teacher, Irenæus made such progress in virtue and sacred science, that he was by him ordained priest and sent to Lyons, in France, to preach the Gospel of Christ to the heathens, and to assist the persecuted Christians. On his arrival after a most tedious voyage, he began at once to discharge the duties of his function with truly apostolic zeal. To the heathens he preached the Gospel of the Lord, and bore testimony to it with many miracles; hence almost all, who had not yet embraced Christianity, became believers in the true God. The Christians, who had to suffer persecution, he encouraged to remain constant in their faith in the midst of their tortures. After the persecution of the faithful had somewhat subsided, Photinus, Bishop of Lyons, sent him to Rome, to get the solution of several questions and doubts which the Christians of that city had addressed to Eleutherius, who at that period was Pope. The latter received Irenæus with great joy, as he had been informed of his zeal, and gave him the answers to all questions and doubts. On this occasion, Irenæus watched carefully all the ceremonies which were performed at Rome, and acquainted himself with the ancient traditions which had been left there by the Apostles, that he might be able to introduce them at Lyons.

Meanwhile the holy bishop Photinus, received the crown of Martyrdom at Lyons, and Irenæus, on his return, was chosen to fill the vacant See. Having taken upon himself this heavy and dangerous burden, he employed all his efforts to gather his flock, which, partly discouraged by long persecutions, had dispersed hither and thither. He encouraged the despondent, strengthened the wavering, raised the fallen, consoled the sorrowful, instructed the ignorant, and comforted the needy, both by words and deeds. After having thus, in every way, bettered the condition of his Church, he sent several excellent and zealous priests to the neighboring cities and villages, charging them to convert the inhabitants, who were idolaters, to the faith of Christ, which, to the salvation of numberless souls, was happily effected.

Satan, unable to bear the success of the holy bishop's endeavors, sent the two notorious arch-heretics, Marcion and Valentine, into the neighborhood of Lyons, to sow the seeds of their heresy among the newly converted. The Saint, however, manifested no less watchfulness in protecting the faithful, than solicitude in converting the heathens. He not only disclosed and refuted, in his sermons, the falsehood of the doctrines which were disseminated by these heretics, but he also used the pen against them, and wrote several learned books, in which he placed the truth of the apostolic faith and the errors of heresy so clearly before the eyes of every one, that no heretics dared further to disturb the peace of his flock with their wicked doctrines. The faithful were strengthened to such a degree in their belief by these works, that in a persecution which took place later, they preferred to sacrifice their lives, rather than depart in the least from the precepts of their Church. The heroic constancy of so many Christians has been most justly ascribed to the indefatigable zeal of Irenæus. It was also the result of his endeavors, that several bishops, who had forsaken the Pope, returned to him, and that others remained obedient to the holy Father. Victor, the holy Pope, had decided that the Christians should not celebrate Easter on the same day as the Jews: but, according to a verbal direction of St. Peter, on a Sunday. Many bishops in the East had adopted a different rule for the celebration of the feast, and would not alter it. Irenæus exhorted all, in several letters, to be obedient to the Church at Rome, as the mother and instructress of all the other Churches. The high esteem in which the holiness and erudition of Irenæus was held by every one, was the cause that almost all the refractory Bishops submitted to the judgment of the Pope.

After this and many more labors of St. Irenæus for the

Church of Christ and for the salvation of souls, a new persecution of the Christians arose in the reign of the Emperor Severus. So many were executed in Lyons, that according to the language of St. Gregory, Bishop of Tours, the streets were overflowed with blood. And among those who thus testified with their lives to Christ's teachings, was also St Irenæus. He taught by his example what he had so often preached to his fold, namely, to suffer the most cruel martyrdom rather than abandon the true faith. The body of this Saint was buried by Zachary, a Priest, and was always kept in great honor, until the year 1562, when Lyons was besieged and taken by the Huguenots. They tore the holy relics out of the tomb where they rested and threw them into a well, while they cast the head, after treating it most indecently, into a pit. The head was, however, found after some time and publicly exposed to receive due honor.



To this short life of St. Irenæus we will add a few words concerning the holy Bishop Benno, who is recorded in the Roman Martyrology on the 16th day of this month. He was born at Hildesheim, in the year 1010. His parents were Frederic of Bultenberg and Bezela, a very pious woman. Under the direction of Wiger, who was in charge of the celebrated Church of St. Michael, Benno was instructed most perfectly, not only in the Christian religion, but also in the liberal arts. When he had arrived at manhood, his father desired him to perpetuate their noble name by marriage, but Benno evinced more inclination for a religious life, and after the death of his father, entered a Benedictine monastery. In this school of virtue he became such a model of sanctity, that, after a few years, he was elected successor of the late Abbot; but resigned the dignity after three months, desiring to serve God in more quiet retirement. His tranquillity, however, was much sooner disturbed than he had anticipated; for, in accordance with the Emperor's request, Pope Leo IX. made him Provost of the College at Gosslar, and afterwards, in the 56th year of his age, bishop of Meissen. He filled that see during forty years in such a manner, that he gained the reputation of great holiness. He visited his entire diocese every year, preached in every place and thereby greatly benefited his flock. Besides this, he brought the Vandals, who had remained in France, and had been badly instructed in the Christian faith, from their errors, to perfect submission to all the articles of the faith of the Catholic Church. He earned still greater praise by the invincible fortitude he manifested when Henry IV. persecuted Pope Gregory VII. and endeavored

to raise all the bishops against him. Benno, fearing God more than the Emperor, defended the just cause of the Pope, and fearlessly forbade the Margrave of Meissen to enter into the Church, as he and the Emperor, with all their followers, were excommunicated by the Pope. After this, he set out on his journey to the Council convoked by the Pope; but threw the keys of his church into the Elbe, that they might not fall into the hands of the excommunicated. The Emperor had him taken prisoner on his return, but only for a short time. The day he was set free, a large fish was caught in the Elbe, in which the keys were found which the Saint had thrown into the water. Greatly rejoicing over this event, the holy bishop acquitted himself of his sacred charge with renewed zeal. He benefited his flock greatly by his unwearied endeavors, and was greatly esteemed, not only on account of his holy life, but also on account of the many miracles which he wrought by the grace of the Almighty. Among other things, it is said that he walked over the Elbe without wetting his feet; that, to refresh the laborers in the field, he changed water into wine; and at another time, he caused a spring of fresh water to break forth out of the ground. He was also seen at two different and widely separated places at the same time, and also restored health to many invalids.

When he was in the 40th year of his sacred office, he felt the approach of death, and having prepared himself most carefully to appear before God, he exhorted all near him to continue in the right path; and while praying, closed his eyes to the light of this world to open them in heaven.

After his death, more miracles were wrought by his intercession than during his life-time. These continued until the time of Charles V., who requested the Apostolic See to canonize the holy Bishop. This ceremony was performed by Pope Adrian VI., with the usual solemnities. Martin Luther, who felt that the miracles and holiness of Benno refuted his doctrines, wrote a sacrilegious book under the title: "Against the new idol and old devil, who is to be exalted at Meissen." The malignant slanderer did not, however, gain his end. The holy relics were duly honored by all the faithful, as long as the Catholic religion was tolerated at Meissen. But when John, the last Catholic Bishop of the city, feared that the heretics might dishonor them, he transported them, at the request of Duke Albert, to Munich, where they are venerated at this day in the Church of Our Lady. Many volumes have been filled with the relations of the benefits which God has bestowed upon those who asked the intercession of Saint Benno.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Although the lives of the two holy bishops Irenaeus and Benno were separated by nine centuries, (the former was born in the first, the latter in the eleventh century of the Christian Era,) yet they were united in faith; which is shown especially by the fact that both recognized, honored and obeyed the Pope, as the visible head of Christ's church upon earth, and that they exhorted others to do the same. Both remained true to him, when others, through disobedience, had forsaken him. You, as a Catholic, are obliged to obey the Church and her visible head, and if you fail in this, you belong not to the faithful but in accordance with the well-known words of Christ, to the heathens and publicans. Many withdraw from the obedience they owe, by transgressing the commands of the Church and not recognizing the Pope's authority. Do not imitate them, as otherwise you make yourself worthy of damnation. Think of the memorable words of St. Paul with which he admonishes the Christians to obedience both to clerical and worldly authority: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers; "for, there is no power but from God: and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation." (Rom. xiii.)

II. Our two Bishops lived in the Catholic Church, in that Church which is called Roman, or Papal. Their lives are an incontestible proof of it: in it they gained salvation. They died in this Church and went to everlasting peace. Of not a single man, from the time of Christ until now, who died out of the pale of the Catholic Church, can it be proved that he died holy and

saved his soul. May this convince you that the Catholic Church alone is the true Church of Christ. Alone, I say; for there is only one true Church of Christ, as there is only one true God, one true Christ, one true faith. This only true Church is the Catholic Church, as Christ our Lord has founded that, and no other Church. It is further an undeniable fact that she was the first christian Church, which recognizes no other founder but Christ. She has the infallible marks of the true Church, as she is one, holy, Catholic and apostolic. No other Church on the face of the earth can give this evidence of herself. Hence the Catholic Church alone is the true Church. To say, that she was at first the true Church, but ceased to be so, because she had fallen into error and superstition, makes Christ a liar; for, He has said that the gates of hell should not prevail against the Church He would build. (Matth. xvi.) If, therefore, the Catholic Church was, according to the non-catholics, at first the true Church, then she must still be the same, and remain so until the end of time. What is to be concluded from this? That we can be saved only in the Catholic Church: an important truth, which we ought to imprint deeply into our innermost heart! Whoever is a member of this Church, may well give thanks to God for the grace, and remain in it. Whoever is not one of her children, should follow St. Augustine, who says: "They ought to come to the true Church of Christ that is, to the Catholic Mother." For, the words of St. Cyprian are and will remain true: "As, at the time of the flood, no man could be saved except in the Ark of Noah; so also we cannot be saved except in the pale of the true Church."

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. PETER, PRINCE OF THE APOSTLES.

Although the Catholic Church celebrates the festival of St. Peter and St. Paul to-day, yet, as the office and Mass of to-morrow are especially appointed for the commemoration of St. Paul, we will give to-day to St. Peter and to-morrow to St. Paul.

Peter, the prince of the Apostles, the visible head of the Christian Church, the Vicar of Christ on earth, was born at Bethsaida, a small town in Galilee, on the Sea of Genesareth. Before he became a follower of Christ, he was called Simon, and his father Jonas or John. He married Perpetua, a daughter of Aristobulus, but left her afterwards for Christ's sake. Andrew, his elder brother, was a disciple of John the Baptist. As soon as the latter had heard, from the lips of his holy teacher, that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah, and had convinced himself of the fact by a conversation with Christ, he informed his brother Simon of it and went with him to the Saviour. Christ, looking at Simon, said: "Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas," which means the same as Peter or a rock. After having had some discourses with Christ, Peter again went home, and announced to others the advent of the true Messiah. Some time later, Christ walked by the Sea of Galilee and saw Peter and Andrew casting their nets into the sea, for they were fishermen. Christ said to them: "Come ye after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him; and from that moment, Peter left the Saviour no more, but followed Him whithersoever He went. The Gospel allows us no doubt that our Lord showed on all occasions a peculiar affection for Peter. He went into Peter's ship and out of it taught the multitudes pressing to hear Him. He took him to Mount Thabor to His transfiguration. He desired to have him near when He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, and also when His sufferings commenced on Mount Olivet. He promised to build His Church so strongly upon him, that not even the gates of hell should prevail against it. He said that He would give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, adding, that whatsoever Peter should bind or loose on earth, should be bound or loosed in heaven. He prayed especially for Peter, that his faith might not fail, and exhorted him to strengthen his brethren. When Peter had denied Him, He looked at him so compassionately that He moved his heart to

repentance. After the Resurrection, Christ appeared to him especially and appointed him as the shepherd over His flock, made him His Vicar on earth and the visible head of His church.

We find, however, in the Gospel also, that Peter showed peculiar humility, faith and devotion towards our Lord. When he, obeying Christ's command, let down his net into the sea and filled two boats with fishes, he deemed himself unworthy of the presence of the Lord, and falling down at His feet, he said: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." When the Saviour would wash his feet, he cried in astonishment: "Lord dost thou wash my feet? this shall never be done!" But when he heard Christ's menace: "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me," he submitted to the Saviour's will and said: "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." He evinced clearly his faith in Christ, when he made the magnificent confession: "Thou art Christ, the son of the living God!" His love for the Redeemer was manifested on different occasions. Several disciples of Christ left Him one day, not willing to listen further to His teachings, and Christ asked his Apostles: "Will ye also leave me?" Peter answered: "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Love would not allow him to think of leaving. At another time, Christ mentioned His approaching passion, and Peter, not yet comprehending the mystery of the Redemption, would prevent Him, and said: "Lord, be it far from thee: this shall not be unto thee." He would not consent that the object of his affection should suffer. Peter's love to Christ was the cause of his twice throwing himself into the sea to be so much sooner with Him. He would not and could not wait until the boat, in which he was with the other disciples, had landed. Out of the heart of Peter, so full of devotion to his Divine Master, came also the fearless words, that he was ready to go with Him to prison and to death, and that if all were to forsake Him, he would not leave Him. To humble his too great confidence in himself, the contrary happened; for, Peter left Christ in the garden and denied Him three times at the house of Caiphas; but no sooner did the crowing of the cock bring to his memory the prophecy of the Lord, and no sooner had the compassionate eye of the latter fallen on him, than he repented of his fault with bitter tears. There is no doubt that God pardoned him, but it is emphatically stated in the life of the holy Apostle, that he daily repented of this denial as long as he lived; and that in the night, when he heard the cock crow, he shed floods of tears at the remembrance of it.

After Christ's resurrection, Peter was asked three times by the Saviour if he loved Him more than the others. And three times Peter answered: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." With this repeated confession of his love, Christ was so well pleased, that He entrusted to him all His flock with the words: "Feed my lambs: Feed my sheep." This charge Peter began to administer soon after Christ's ascension, when he admonished the assembled apostles and disciples to choose another apostle in the place of the traitor Judas; and also when, on Pentecost, after having received the Holy Ghost, he preached the first sermon to the Jews, with such zeal and fervency, that three thousand of them were at once converted. He was also the first who confirmed the teachings of the Gospel by miracles. The first of these he wrought on a lame beggar, who daily asked alms at the gate of the temple. Peter said to him: "Silver and gold I have none; but what I have I give thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk." And at the same moment, the man, who had been lame from his birth, arose and walked. This first miracle was followed by many others, and as holy Writ relates, Peter's shadow falling upon the sick, was sufficient to restore them to health. When the High Priests of the Jews commanded Peter and the other apostles to preach no more of Christ, Peter replied: "If it be just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, judge ye." And again, at another time, he said: "We ought to obey God rather than men." Hence he did not discontinue to announce Christ as the true Messiah, although, on account of it, he was cast into prison and scourged. He was also the first, who, following a divine inspiration, preached the Gospel to the Gentiles, as is related in the 10th Chapter of the Acts.

What more this Prince of the Apostles did to disseminate the true faith, cannot be told in a few words. He travelled through all Judæa, and preached and wrought miracles wherever he went. He restored, in one moment, the health of Æneas, who had been suffering of the palsy for eight years, and raised Tabitha, a pious widow, to life. Later he went into several other countries, laying everywhere the first stone of Christianity, consecrated bishops and priests, who were to govern the newly founded churches. His first See he established at Antioch, and remained there seven years, but announcing also in many other places the Gospel of the Lord. He then went to Rome, where idolatry had built her principal temples. Thence he sent his disciples, who were all animated with apostolic zeal, to Spain, France, Sicily, Germany, and other countries, to preach the Christian faith. He himself fixed his See at Rome, and by his sermons

converted numberless heathens. When, nine years later, he was driven away from Rome, with many Christians, he went to Jerusalem, and visited the newly converted in those parts, comforted and cheered them, preached to those who were still in the darkness of unbelief, and then returned to Rome, where he brilliantly defeated the magician Simon. The latter had, by his magic, not only blinded the Emperor Nero, but also the Roman people, and had prevented many from embracing the true faith. Peter discovered his fraud, and to confirm the doctrines he taught, he raised a dead person to life, which Simon endeavored to do, but had not the power. After this, the magician appointed a day on which he, in evidence of the truth until now taught by him, would ascend visibly to heaven. The day came and Simon, assisted by the devil, was really raised from the ground. Peter, however, prayed, and then commanded the devil to depart and behold! the imposter fell down, broke his legs, and had to be carried away covered with grief and shame.

This splendid miracle opened the eyes of many unbelievers, who desired to be baptized. But Nero, of whom Simon was a great favorite, was enraged against St. Peter, and had him cast into a dungeon with St. Paul. The faithful, with tearful eyes, begged St. Peter to escape in order to preserve his life and take care of them. Love to his flock persuaded the holy apostle to fulfil their wish. Having already arrived at the gates of the city, he met Christ, and, amazed at this vision, he asked Him: "Master, whither goest thou?" "I go into the city to be crucified again," replied the Lord. The apostle, comprehending these words, returned to his prison and remained there until Nero gave the order, that Peter, as a Jew, should be crucified, and Paul, as a Roman citizen, should be beheaded. When the appointed day had arrived, Peter was scourged and then fastened to a cross. The joy which he manifested in suffering thus for his faith awakened the admiration of all present. He requested that the cross might be raised in such a manner that his head would hang down, as he deemed himself unworthy to die like his Saviour. His wish was complied with, and the Saint thus painfully ended his holy life. Marcellus, a priest, buried him upon the Vatican Hill, where his relics are still honored by the Christian world. The books of the holy Fathers are filled with praise of the deeds of this glorious Apostle, this first Pope and Vicar of Christ.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I How sad a downfall! Peter, who had been during three years a devoted follower of Christ, and had, only a short time before, publicly recognized Him, in the presence of all the other disciples, as the son of the living God, who, a few hours before, had boldly declared that he would not be scandalized in Christ if all others were, and that he would follow Him to death;—denied Christ thrice in one night. How sad a fall! According to the opinion of St. Augustine, our Lord permitted this, first, because Peter relied too much on his own strength: secondly, that Peter, whom Christ intended to be His Vicar, should feel compassion when great sinners would come to him and ask forgiveness of their misdeeds; as he would know, by his own experience, how weak man is and how easily he falls. May you derive from it the following lesson. Despise no one who has committed great wrong, especially if such a one has repented and is on the way to a better life. Never reproach him with his crimes; but think that you have perhaps committed as great sin or would have done so, had you been placed in the same dangers, the same temptations, the same sufferings. If you have not fallen like him, be not conceited; but give thanks to the Almighty for shielding you so graciously, and take care that you do not fall. Secondly: never trust too implicitly in your own strength, and when you make the resolution to avoid this or that sin, or to do a good work, always pray to God to give you grace to keep your promise. This is especially necessary, early in the morning, when you ought to pray to God to assist you in all dangers and temptations. Lay the

above deeply to heart, that it may take root and bear life-giving fruit.

II. As soon as Christ looked compassionately on Peter, thus reproaching him with his fault, the latter, weeping bitterly went away from the place where he had sinned, and with his whole heart, repented of his misdeed. This repentance he continued while he lived, although he had the assurance that Christ had forgiven him. Let this be an example of true penance to you. Do not continue in the sin you have committed; repent with your whole heart, out of love to the Almighty, and confess it, as soon as possible, to a priest. Avoid all occasion to do wrong; else your repentance is not true, your confession void, your penance false and without benefit. But even when you have done all that was necessary to free you from your guilt, still, so long as life lasts, never cease to repent of the evil you committed, and to beg God to pardon you, as you are not certain, as Peter was, that your sins are forgiven, although you may hope it. All true penitents act in this manner. King David, in the old Testament, was assured, by the mouth of the prophet, that his sins were forgiven; yet he repented of them daily. How often he asked God to forgive him may be seen in his Psalms. "I will wash my bed, I will water my couch with my tears," says he. (Ps. vi.) Somewhere else he says, that he has shed rivers of tears at the remembrance of his iniquities. "In one night he committed sin," writes Saint Chrysostom, "and he wept over it all other nights." "To day," writes St. James of Nisibis, "people pass many whole nights in sin, and think that a single hour's weeping over them is sufficient."

May you not act thus. Follow the examples of King David and St. Peter, and let not a day pass without repenting of your sins and praying to God to forgive them. "We must wash away, by continual tears, the iniquity of which we have even once been guilty:" is another admonition of St. James.

THIRTIETH DAY OF JUNE.

ST. PAUL, APOSTLE.

St. Paul, the great Apostle and Doctor of the Gentiles, was born a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin. His native place was Tarsus, a celebrated city in Cilicia. His father sent him to Jerusalem, where he was educated by the famous Gamaliel, not only in the law but in all the ceremonies of the Hebrews. He soon surpassed all his schoolmates in knowledge, and became zealous in maintaining and defending the laws; and consequently, he was one of the most cruel persecutors of Christianity. It was he who kept the garments of those who stoned Stephen. The older he grew, the more deeply rooted became his hatred of the Christians. Not only at Jerusalem, but also in other places, he sought for those confessing Christ and delivered them into the hands of the authorities for imprisonment. One day, he requested a commission from the High Priest at Jerusalem to the Jews at Damascus, by virtue of which they were to aid him in apprehending all the Christians that were residing there. With this order, he went, full of rage and hatred, to Damascus. When he was near the city, he suddenly beheld a light from heaven which shone around him. Saul, (this was his name before his conversion), fell in affright to the ground and heard a voice saying: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "Who art thou, Lord?" asked Saul. "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest," said the voice from heaven. Although Saul trembled at these words, he answered: "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord replied: "Arise and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do." Saul's companions heard the voice, but saw no one. Saul arose from the ground, opened his eyes, but saw nothing, having lost his sight. Having been led to Damascus, he remained three days and nights in prayer, tasting neither food nor drink. Meanwhile Ananias, a disciple of the Lord, was informed in a vision of all that had taken place, and, going into the house where Saul was, he

instructed him, restored his sight by laying his hands on him, and baptized him. Soon after receiving holy baptism, Saul, now named Paul, went into the Synagogue, and preaching boldly that Christ was the true and long-promised Messiah, he proved the truth of his words so clearly that no one could gainsay them. All were amazed at the change that had taken place in him, and, not able to refute his doctrines, they consulted together to kill him. The faithful, however, let him down in a basket over the walls of the city, and thus he escaped death. After this, he went to Jerusalem and desired to join the Christians there; but as they knew nothing of his conversion, they were afraid of him and would not receive him among them. Paul finding St. Barnabas, who had been his schoolmate, related to him what had taken place, and was by him brought to the apostles, who rejoiced greatly at his conversion, and gave due thanks and praise to God. From this time, St. Paul preached the Gospel everywhere with great ardor, journeyed through many cities, lands and kingdoms, brought many thousands to Christianity, and sent many apostolic men into different countries to convert the inhabitants. Who can give an account of his cares and labors, the disgrace and derision, the misery and persecution which he suffered for the true Faith? He himself relates it in his Epistles, particularly in the eleventh chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians. The same is done by St. Luke in the Acts. Among other things, he says that a prophet had told St. Paul, when the latter was about to go from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, that they would seize him at that place and deliver him to the heathens. Hence his disciples would not allow him to depart; but neither tears nor prayers could detain him. "I, am ready," said he, "not only to be bound in Jerusalem, but also to die for the name of Jesus."

He proved his words by deeds. When he arrived at Jerusalem, he immediately went into the temple to pray, but hardly had the Jews seen him, when they fell upon him, dragged him out of the temple and would certainly have killed him with their blows, had not the Tribune, Claudius Lysias, hastily appeared with his soldiers and released him from their fury. He, however, took him prisoner and sent him to Cæsarea to the Governor Felix, who, although he found him innocent, kept him in prison. Festus, his successor, would have sent him back to Jerusalem that he might be judged there, but Paul appealed to the Emperor and was sent to Rome, where, after two years of imprisonment, he was set at liberty. The Saint then began again his apostolic labors, travelled through Italy and France, ventured even to Spain, preaching the Gospel everywhere and converting a great number of peo-

ple. At last, he returned to Rome, and among others, he exhorted some concubines of the godless Emperor Nero, to forsake their wicked life. When he had so far succeeded in converting them that, in their love of chastity, none of them would longer submit to the tyrant's lust, the enraged Nero gave orders to imprison St. Paul as well as St. Peter. Somewhat later, both were condemned to die, Peter upon the Cross, Paul by the sword. St. Chrysostom relates that the blood that flowed from the body of St. Paul when he was beheaded, was not red, but milk-white. It is also said that his head, when severed from his body, sprang up three times from the ground, and that, each time, water gushed forth. To this day, three springs, which are shown at the place where his execution took place, confirm the tradition.

St. Paul was undoubtedly favoured with special graces and virtues. He wrought many and great miracles. By the touch of his handkerchief, the sick were immediately restored and the possessed released. He had many visions both of angels and of Christ, the Lord, Himself. Once, during a tempest on the sea, an angel appeared to him announcing that for his sake, the Almighty would spare the lives of all that were in the ship. At Corinth, our Lord appeared to him and said: "Fear not, but speak: be not silent." At Jerusalem, He visited him again, saying: "Hasten, quickly leave Jerusalem;" and at another time the Saviour said to him: "Be constant; for, as thou hast given testimony of me at Jerusalem, so must thou do at Rome." Besides these comforting visions, the holy Apostle had the grace to be carried up, in an ecstasy, to the third heaven, to see there such great mysteries, that he was incapable of speaking of them. His heavenly wisdom and eloquence are clearly manifested in his epistles, the reading of which has occasioned many miraculous conversions. They also give evidence of the great virtue of this holy Apostle, especially of his fervent love to the Saviour and towards his neighbor; of the purity of his life; his humility, austere penance and invincible patience. He loved his crucified Redeemer so much, that he could write: "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me. Christ is my life. I am fastened on the Cross with Christ. Who can separate us from the love of Christ? I am convinced that neither life, nor death, neither height nor depth, nor any other creature can separate us from the love of God which is manifested in our Lord, Jesus Christ." He gloried in nothing save in the Cross of the Saviour. The holy name of Jesus was constantly in his mouth and proceeded constantly from his pen.

He gave equal proofs of his love for his neighbor. The many and laborious voyages which he undertook, the many and great

dangers and persecutions which he suffered, the inexpressibly great labor and care which he took upon himself, show how unselfishly he loved his neighbor. His zeal to save souls was insatiable, and his solicitude for the welfare of others, more than fatherly. He loved the newly converted like dear children and carried them all, as he said, in his heart before God. He kept his chastity inviolate, advised others to do the same, and showed, by his deeds, how we must fight against impure temptations; that is, by taking refuge with God in prayer and chastising his body with hunger and thirst, heat and cold, fasting and watching. With all his great deeds and the many graces he had received from the Almighty, he was so humble, that he more than once confessed the wickedness with which he had treated the Christians before his conversion; and though he worked more than all the others, he called himself the least of Apostles. His great love for Christ and his hope of an eternal reward cheered him, as he writes, in all that he had to suffer. On account of these and other virtues, to relate all of which would fill many books, there can be no doubt that St. Paul is raised to great glory in heaven. At the time of his death, he was 68 years old. His holy relics rest beside those of St. Peter at Rome.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I. A ravenous wolf, a roaring lion, is changed into a meek lamb; a sworn enemy of the Christians, into their protector and teacher; an embittered persecutor of the Church of Christ, into an apostle; a sinner into a Saint; a Saul into a Paul! Surely this was a conversion that the mighty hand of God alone could work: an unquestionable example of the infinite mercy of the Most High. "I who before was a blasphemer and a persecutor and contumelious," said the holy apostle of himself, "but I obtained the mercy of God" (I Tim. i.). Truly he obtained mercy, and inexpressibly great was the mercy he received. For at the same time that he was raging against the Christians, endeavoring to imprison them and bring them to Jerusalem; at the time when he merited hell for his wickedness, God opened his eyes, called him to turn from his sinful path, told him how to act, and granted him more than sufficient grace to begin the work of his conversion. But why did God show such mercy to Paul? The apostle himself replies; "But for this cause have I obtained mercy; that in me first, Christ Jesus might show forth all patience for the information of them that shall believe in him unto life everlasting" (I Tim. i.). God would place an example of His mercy before the eyes of men, and make known that no one is so great a sinner that he may not be converted and receive pardon for his iniquities. And let this, my Reader, be to-day a lesson for you. But you have still

to consider one point more. God showed great mercy to St. Paul and made him the partaker of great graces; but St. Paul co-operated with these graces. If he had not done so, he would not have become a Saint. "But by the grace of God," says he, "I am what I am, and his grace in me hath not been void. I have labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God with me" (Cor. xv.). Learn from this to co-operate with the grace God gives you; otherwise His mercy will be void in you.

II. As soon as St. Paul recognized the wickedness he had committed in persecuting the Christians, and understood the divine will by a heavenly vision and by the instructions of St. Ananias, he converted himself unhesitatingly to God, and, soon after, commenced to preach fearlessly the same faith he had before so cruelly persecuted. The remaining 34 years of his life he employed zealously in the service of the Almighty and made more than sufficient amends for his past offences. He was not satisfied that he himself had become a Christian, and that he served God, but he endeavored to convert others, as well Jews as heathens, to Christianity, and to lead them to a holy life by verbal and written instructions. How great a work he had taken upon himself, and what dangers and persecutions he had to endure on account of it, may be partly seen in his Epistles. God has, for a long time, made you sensible of the wickedness of your sins, the greatness of the danger to which you expose yourself, your need of a serious conversion. When will you then commence it? "And thinkest thou," I ask you in the words of St. Paul, "that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou

not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up to thyself wrath" (Rom. ii.). If you wish to avoid the terrible wrath of God, do not delay. Repent without further loss of time, and then, according to your station in life, mould your conduct after that of St. Paul. Think that he says to you from heaven, what he wrote to the Philippians: "Be ye followers of me (Philipp. iii.)!"

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What you have read of St. Peter and St. Paul, should make you carefully consider the immeasurable goodness of the Almighty towards sinners. Peter had committed sin in denying the Saviour. Paul had become guilty of great iniquity in persecuting the Church of Christ. Both did penance, both were again received into the favor of the Lord. Neither of them was ever reproached with his former crimes. God loved them not less than He loved others who had not offended Him. And what is still more to be admired, He conferred on both more graces than on others. He appeared to Peter on the day of His resurrection, before His other disciples had beheld Him, and gave to him the government of His Church. To Paul also He appeared several times and most miraculously assisted him. He instructed St. Peter, in an ecstasy, to teach and convert the heathens. He chose Paul before others as the teacher of the Gentiles and revealed to him the greatest secrets of heaven. On both He bestowed, in a much higher degree than on the other apostles, the gift of miracles. Are not all these marks of God's especial goodness towards penitent sinners? Ah! how different is one man to another, when he has to forgive a fault or a wrong! After it, he is seldom so kind towards the offender as he was before; and it is not even to be

supposed that he would ever show marks of greater love or kindness. He may even sometimes reproach him with his offences and make him atone for them. Not thus does the infinitely great and merciful God treat us. He loves the penitent sinner and confess on him the greatest favors if he perseveres

in the path of virtue. Is it possible that we can offend so good a God over and over again? Should we not repent immediately after having committed sin, in order to participate in the graces of the Lord?

NOTE.—To-day is the last day of the month. Remember what I have elsewhere advised you.

A, WORD TO THE READER AT THE END OF THE FIRST SIX MONTHS.

While reading what has been related to you of so many Saints, you have doubtless sometimes thought: Oh! that I might die as these Saints died! Oh! that I might become worthy of the salvation which they gained! These wishes are holy: but if you do not endeavor to conform your life to the lives of the Saints, these wishes, holy as they are, will be as unavailing to you, as was the holy wish of the wicked Balaam, when in the sight of the camp of the Israelites, he cried: "Oh! that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my end were as their end!" Balaam died not the death of the righteous Israelites, because he endeavored not to live as the just and pious Israelites lived. And you, my reader, will not die as the Saints died, nor will you, after this life, go where they are, if you do not endeavor to model your life on theirs. Let it then be your care to follow the Saints in their faith, in avoiding sin, in the practice of good, in patiently bearing sorrows and adversity, and in perseverance until the end. If you succeed in this, then your last hour will be like theirs, and you will follow them into eternal happiness.

MOVEABLE FEASTS.

EASTER, OR THE FESTIVAL OF THE GLORIOUS RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

To-day's festival is one of the oldest as well as the most solemn of the Christian year, and was doubtless instituted by the holy Apostles themselves. In the Old Testament God appointed an Easter which the Jews celebrated in grateful remembrance of two great benefits which God had bestowed upon them. The first of these was the occasion when the destroying-angel slew in one night, every first-born of man and animals in the dwellings of the Egyptians, while he passed over those of the Jews—who had reddened their door-posts with the blood of the lamb—leaving his chosen people unharmed. The second was their miraculous passage through the Red Sea, after they had left Egypt.

The Christian Easter, of which, according to the words of the holy fathers, the Jewish festival was the type, is instituted in commemoration of the glorious Resurrection of Our Saviour Jesus Christ.

We learn from the four Evangelists that Our Lord, after bitter suffering, ended his holy life by a painful and ignominious death on the Cross. This happened on the day we call Good Friday, at 9 o'clock, according to the Jewish time, and 3 o'clock p. m., according to ours. In the evening of that day came a just and pious man from Arimathæa, named Joseph, who was secretly a disciple of Christ, and fearlessly demanded the body. Pilate permitted him to take it, after having made enquiries to ascertain the Saviour's death. Joseph, therefore, made all necessary arrangements to remove the holy body from the Cross with all possible reverence. When this was accomplished, they washed it and embalmed it with the most costly spices, of which Nicodemus had brought a large quantity. Nicodemus was also a secret follower of the Saviour, and came to assist Joseph in his pious work. After having anointed the body they wound around it linen and laid it in a new tomb, which Joseph had had hewn for himself in the rock, and then they rolled a large stone before the entrance. The tomb was not in the earth as the graves are now, but was a vault or cavern hewn in a rock.

The Scribes and Pharisees were rejoiced that their wickedness had succeeded in causing the ignominious death of Christ on the Cross, because by this means—so they falsely and sacri-

legiously thought—they had rid themselves of their greatest enemy. Their joy, however, although very great, was still not without anxiety, as they remembered that the Redeemer had declared at different times, that on the third day He would arise from the dead. Hence they feared not without reason, that should the report of His resurrection be disseminated, it would excite the people more than all the miracles He had wrought during His life. Therefore they went to Pilate and requested that he would keep the sepulchre of Christ guarded during three days. They feared, as they said, that His disciples would come to take away the body, and report among the people that Christ had risen from the dead. Their request was granted; the tomb was not only strongly guarded, but was sealed, that no fraud might take place. By this means they believed themselves to be quite safe, and that they had prevented the possibility of a report of Christ's resurrection. But all their precautions served only to spread abroad so much sooner the Lord's resurrection, and even procured for it several witnesses, as we shall presently see, when we have reflected on the work which in the meantime was done by the most holy soul of our Saviour.

It is an article of faith that His soul, as soon as it departed from the holy body, descended into hell, that is, to that subterranean place, where, as in a prison, the souls of those were kept, who, from Adam unto Christ, had died in the grace of God, or who had done penance in this world, or who had been cleansed in purgatory. They could not enter heaven, as before Christ's ascension, sin had closed its gates to all. This place, where the souls had to remain, is generally called limbo, and in it the souls had not to suffer, as those who were in purgatory or hell; their only suffering consisted in being deprived of heaven, and of the vision of God. As they knew that they could not enter heaven until man was redeemed, it is easy to conceive how they longed and sighed for the Messiah. Who then will venture to describe—who can imagine their happiness, when the sacred soul of Christ, surrounded with inexpressible splendor, entered their abode, and announced to them that the great work of redemption was accomplished! How they must have rejoiced and offered praise and thanks to their Redeemer! Not less was the joy of the souls who were suffering in purgatory; for, St. Augustine and many other holy fathers believed that the holy soul of Christ appeared visibly to these also, and released them from their painful imprisonment.

Accompanied by these souls, the sacred soul of Christ returned on the third day to the sepulchre, where the holy body was reposing. The soul of Christ then reanimated the body and

made it resplendent with beauty : all its wounds were healed, except five which the Saviour kept.

Thus Christ returned again to life, rising gloriously from the grave, without moving the great stone which was lying before it, or breaking the seal with which the Jews had secured the sepulchre. For the holy body of Christ had already received those four spiritual gifts which are given by God to each glorified body, namely : impassibility, agility, clearness or brilliancy and subtilty. By virtue of the latter, the body of Christ penetrated the stone before the sepulchre, and on the evening of the same day, passed through the locked door into the hall where the eleven Apostles were assembled with the rest of His disciples.

After the resurrection of the Saviour, an earthquake was felt. An Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, rolled the stone from the sepulchre and sat down upon it. The soldiers, stationed there to guard it, already terrified by the trembling of the earth under their feet, were still more frightened, and became as dead men when they beheld the Angel roll back the stone and seat himself upon it. For, the countenance of the Angel, as St. Matthew emphatically testifies, was as the lightning, and his raiment white as snow. They saw that the sepulchre, opened by the Angel, was empty, without one of Christ's disciples having been near it : hence they could only conclude that the Lord, in accordance with His prophecy, had indeed risen from the dead. Some commentators of Holy Writ are of opinion that the guards of the sepulchre fled at the trembling of the earth and the appearance of the Angel, and having hid themselves behind the hedge of the garden, heard how the Angel soon after announced to the pious women who had come to the tomb, the resurrection of the Saviour. Most certain is the fact that several of them, as soon as they had recovered from their amazement, went to Jerusalem and informed the priests of what had happened. Greatly terrified, these assembled the elders of the people and deliberated as to their future action. They came at last to the conclusion to bribe the guards, with a considerable sum of money, to spread the report among the people that the disciples of Christ had come during the night and had taken away the body of their master while the soldiers were asleep. Nothing more absurd could have been invented ; for who could believe that in so numerous a guard every one would have slept : and if they all slept, how could they know that the disciples of Christ took the body away ? They surely were not able to see them when their eyes were closed in sleep ! And further, what reasonable being would believe that those men who, when their master was seized, were so frightened that they all fled away, would have risked

their lives to carry away His body, guarded as it was, by so many armed soldiers? And had they really dared to do so, how could they so quietly move the large stone by which the sepulchre was closed that not one of the guards was awakened by the noise, when their design would have been frustrated? All this clearly proves that the falsehoods told by the high-priest and elders were absurd. Yet the soldiers, blinded by the money they received, disseminated the story among the people. It is believed, however, that some of them would not be bribed, but freely and openly announced the resurrection of Christ, as we read in the life of St. Longinus. It appears to have been the will of the Almighty that those should be the first witnesses and proclaimers of Christ's resurrection whom the wicked Pharisees had employed to suppress its publication.

Christ Himself made His resurrection known to others by several comforting apparitions: and first to His loving and holy Mother, for although the Gospel says nothing definite of this, there is not one of the fathers of the Church who doubts it. As Mary suffered the most by the passion and death of her beloved Son, because she loved him more than others, so was it due to her that before all others she should be comforted and cheered with the sight and presence of Him who loved her best. But who could describe the joy, the consolation of Mary when she saw her Divine Son surrounded with such beauty and splendor, and brilliant with heavenly glory? In what exulting words must the holy Mother have given forth her joy, and with what reverence must she have adored Christ as her Lord and God, and with what fervent love embraced Him as her Son! All this may be more easily conceived than described. After this, His first appearance, Mary Magdalen, who had gone, accompanied by some other pious women, again to anoint the holy body of Christ, was blessed with a sight of Him. The thought that a great stone was lying before the sepulchre had troubled these pious women greatly on their way; but when they came nearer, they saw that the stone was rolled away. Going into the vault, they found not the body of the Saviour, but an Angel whose appearance frightened them greatly. The Angel, however, said with great sweetness: "Fear not you: for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen as he said. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid. And going quickly, tell ye His disciples that He is risen: and behold He will go before you into Galilee. There shall you see Him as He has foretold it to you." The pious woman returned immediately to Jerusalem and told the disciples what they had heard and seen. But they were not believed, and their words were regarded as a

fable. Peter and John, however desired to convince themselves, and went to the sepulchre, where they found that every thing was true as the women had related. Mary Magdalen, with her companions had followed the Apostles to the sepulchre and remained behind weeping when the others went away. Her tears of sorrow were soon changed into tears of joy, when, in one whom she took for a gardener, Christ made Himself known to her. On her return to Jerusalem, she, with her companions, had the happiness of again seeing and adoring the Lord. This took place on the day on which Christ arose, and on the same day He also appeared to St. Peter and to the two disciples who had gone to Emmaus; and at last when night set in, to all the Apostles, except St. Thomas, who was absent at that time. Eight days later, He manifested Himself again to them, when Thomas was present, and after this to seven disciples who were fishing in the sea of Galilee, and then to more than five hundred brethren or disciples, as is related in Holy Writ. St. Paul says, also, that Christ had appeared to St. James. At last He showed Himself to all the Apostles and other faithful on the Mount of Olives, before He ascended into heaven. All these manifestations are recorded in the four Gospels, and the holy Evangelists have told with touching simplicity everything connected with them.

It is hardly to be doubted that Our Lord was seen on other occasions, during the forty days, which, after His resurrection, He passed upon earth.

The special reason why Christ appeared in so many different ways was, according to the opinion of the holy fathers, that the Apostles, as well as the other faithful, might be strengthened in their belief in His resurrection. For the resurrection of Christ is a fundamental article of the faith of the Christian Church; and is of such vital importance, that St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." (1 Cor. 15.) The resurrection of Christ by His own power is an indubitable proof of His divinity, and gives further evidence of the truth of what He preached and thought. Hence it is just and right that the Catholic Church celebrates Easter, by which she represents to us this principal article of Faith, with great solemnities during several days. She wishes us to rejoice in the words of the Psalmist: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein." (Ps. 117.) She also requires that we, at this time, shall praise the Lord and give Him due thanks. Hence she uses so frequently the heavenly song, "Hallelujah!" which means "Praise the Lord!" I say, heavenly song; for, St. John says in the nineteenth chapter of the Apocalypse that he

had heard the Saints in heaven sing "Hallelujah." What the Church especially requires of her children is, that all, after the example of the Saviour, rise to a new life, and henceforth live only for Christ. In regard to this she has also ordained and commanded that all shall partake of the Holy Communion at Easter.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "As Christ is risen from the dead, so we also may walk in newness of life." (Rom. vi.) With these words uttered by St. Paul, the holy Church admonishes us to rise, after the example of Christ, from the dead and to begin a new life. We die, spiritually, when we commit sin, and we rise from the dead when we do penance. The holy Church requires us to receive the Blessed Sacrament at Easter, and therefore to confess our sins, if we have committed any, which would exclude us from the holy table. Confession aids us to a spiritual resurrection, while the Blessed Eucharist aids us to begin a new life. Now, as the holy Church demands that our resurrection should be after the example of Christ, we will examine more closely the resurrection of Christ.

What were its circumstances? St. Bonaventure says: "Christ rose from the dead early in the morning, truly, wholly and permanently." Thus ought you also to rise. First, early, which means without hesitation, without putting off repentance. "As Christ rose in the morning," writes St. Bonaventure, "thus you should rise from your iniquities, early, not late, or in the evening of your life." Do not postpone your confession and your penance. Secondly, Christ is risen, not only apparently, but in truth. Thus also your repentance should be a true repentance, and your confession a truly sorrowful and perfect confession.

Thirdly, Christ is risen wholly: "He has," says St. Bonaventure, "left no portion of His holy body in the grave." He has left the grave entirely. Thus also must you rise, sincerely confessing all your sins, avoiding all evil, all dangers that you can foresee, all suspicious company, and all sinful attachments. Lastly, Christ has risen permanently, that is, He rose in such a manner, that He afterwards died not again, as others did who were miraculously raised from the dead. The new life which He began at His resurrection was life eternal. "May you also thus rise," admonishes St. Bonaventure, "by a true conversion, that you die not again by a new sin." Commence a new life, and continue in it until your end. Grace for this you can obtain by receiving holy Communion, if you receive it devoutly and worthily. Our Lord Himself says: "He that eateth this bread, shall live forever." (Jno. vi.)

II. Christ has kept in His glorified and immortal body the marks of the five wounds; He ascended to heaven with them and still retains them to this hour. Why this? The holy fathers say: first, as a sign of the great victory which He gained over hell. Secondly, as an eternal memorial of His love to man. Thirdly, that He, as our mediator, by presenting them to the heavenly Father, may obtain for us His mercy. Fourthly, that we, in our sorrows, temptations and trials, might have an asylum in which to seek refuge

Fifthly, that He might lay them bare on the day of judgment to the great consternation of the wicked, as a convincing proof of their iniquities. The consideration of these causes will serve you as a wholesome lesson. I leave it, however, to you to draw the instruction from it, and will only repeat the words of St. Lawrence Justinian, which are as follows: "Christ our Lord has retained the five holy wounds, to present them as well to His Father as to us: to the Almighty, in order to appease His just wrath and to turn it from us: to us, in order to instruct us, that if we would gain salvation, we must show something that we have done or suffered for Christ's sake. Christ shows you His sacred wounds in His hands, His feet, His holy side, which was pierced out of love to you, and in order that heaven might be opened to you. What have you to show that you have suffered out of love to Christ and for the sake of your salvation? Woe to you if you can only show hands which you have used in wicked deeds; feet, that have trodden the path of iniquity; a heart, that has loved sensual pleasures and human creatures rather than God; only eyes, ears, a tongue and a mouth, that you have stained with manifold sins; and,

lastly, a body, which has done and suffered nothing out of love to God. Woe to you! for it is, and ever will remain true, that he who would be saved, must have something to show that he has done and suffered out of love to God, and for his salvation's sake. At least commence now. Follow, before all things, the admonition of the Prophet: "Cleanse thy heart from all iniquity, that thou mayst gain salvation." By a true Easter confession cleanse your heart from all the sins which you have committed with hands or feet, with eyes or ears, with the tongue, or with the faculties of your soul. After it, do not again soil them by new sin, but use them only to the service of the Almighty. Suffer and labor all you can, henceforth, out of love to God and for the salvation of your soul. As, however, to this end you need a peculiar grace from God, pray humbly to your Saviour to obtain this for you from the Almighty, by His five sacred wounds. The following short prayer of St. Francis Xavier may be used for this purpose: "O, my Lord Jesus Christ, Thou love of my heart! I pray Thee by those five holy wounds which love to us opened on Thy body; come to the aid of Thy servant, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood."

ASCENSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

"Let us glory and rejoice, for to-day is the holy and solemn festival of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ!" With these words St. Augustine once commenced his sermon on this day, and justly enjoined on his hearers a spiritual rejoicing, because the day was a day of rejoicing to the Heavenly Father, on account of the glorious return of His Son, whom He, out of love to man, had sent into the world: a day of rejoicing for Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who, after so much suffering and

so ignominious a death, now, as God incarnate, attained to the inexpressible joys and glories of heaven: a day of rejoicing for the souls of the just, who triumphantly entered Paradise with Christ: a day of rejoicing for the angels who accompanied Jesus Christ, their King, whom but a short time previous they had seen, wounded and bruised, die a most bitter death upon the cross: and, lastly, a day of rejoicing for the disciples and apostles of Christ, who might reasonably have been sad because the visible presence of Jesus Christ, their beloved Master, was withdrawn from them, but yet, as recorded in the Holy Writ, they returned to Jerusalem from the place of the ascension with great joy.

As at that time, the day of the ascension was for all a festival, so now its commemoration is and ever will be an occasion of rejoicing. "We have cause to rejoice," as St. Augustine remarks, "that Christ on this day, reopened heaven, which had so long been closed to us, and thus obtained for us free entrance into it, if we walk in the path which He has shown us." Hence, let us rejoice on this day; but that our joy may be useful to our souls, we will consider more closely the mysteries of this day as connected with the ascension of the Lord.

Four points have to be especially regarded; namely, the time, the place, the manner, and the causes of the ascension of Christ. In regard to the time, we know, from the Acts, that it took place on the fortieth day after the resurrection. This day was, according to our chronology, a Thursday. The Passion of Christ had begun on Thursday; therefore, the perfect reward for so much suffering should also commence on a Thursday; to teach us, as Holy Writ explains, that as soon as we begin to suffer after the example of Christ, we also begin to gain our heavenly recompense. On a Thursday Christ instituted the Blessed Eucharist, in which He is truly with us until the end of the world: thus He would also withdraw, on a Thursday, His visible presence from the world, because He, so to speak, had already indemnified us for it in His essential though invisible presence in the most holy Sacrament. The hour which Christ chose for his ascension was in the afternoon, as the holy Fathers conclude from the Gospel. At midnight He was born and came into the world; but He departed from it in the day-time, in order that His disciples should not doubt His ascension. In the afternoon, it is further remarked by the holy Fathers, the first Adam was driven from the earthly Paradise; hence the second Adam desired to enter the heavenly Paradise, which He so gloriously opened at the same time. In the afternoon Christ ended His holy life by a painful and ignominious death; hence He would be raised into heaven at the same time.

If we ask the holy Fathers why this exaltation, this ascension of the Lord, had not taken place immediately after His resurrection, but forty days later, they answer, unanimously, it was in order that His disciples and apostles should be so much more strengthened in their faith in His resurrection, since this was of the greatest importance as the proof of all that the Lord had before taught and preached. It is known from the Gospel that the apostles, though they had so often heard from the lips of Christ that He would rise on the third day, and although the angel had announced the resurrection of the Saviour to the pious women, yet hesitated to believe it. Even after Christ had manifested Himself to them, they still doubted whether it was truly their Master or only an apparition. Thomas would neither believe the pious women to whom Christ had appeared, nor the other apostles, but declared that he would not believe in the resurrection of the Saviour until he saw Him, touched His blessed wounds, and placed his hand in His holy side. To remove every doubt, Christ would not ascend into heaven immediately after His resurrection, but remained forty days longer on earth. During this time He appeared frequently to them, sometimes at one place, sometimes at another, showed His blessed hands and feet to them, and desired that they should touch them. He also ate with them, and, in short, did every thing to convince them that He had truly risen from the dead and lived again. And in truth they must at last have been perfectly convinced of the fact, as they were commissioned by Him to teach the Jews and the Gentiles, beside other articles of Faith, the doctrine of His resurrection from the dead. In addition to these principal causes of Christ's remaining on earth after His resurrection, the holy Fathers say also that He did not wish so soon to leave His beloved disciples, who had hardly had time to console themselves after His bitter Passion and death. Thus, out of love, He remained for some time that He might gradually wean them from His visible presence; and therefore He did not remain constantly visible among them, as He had done before His Passion, but manifested Himself to them only at times. St. Luke tells us, in a few words, what was the chief subject of His intercourse with them: "He appeared for forty days to them, speaking of the Kingdom of God." (Acts i.)

The true Church of Christ is often called, in Holy Writ, the Kingdom of Heaven, or of God. Of this kingdom Christ often discoursed with His apostles, and He instructed them, according to the holy Fathers, how to govern His Church, and, further, how to consecrate priests and other servants of the Lord, how to dispense the holy Sacraments, to institute sacred ceremonies,

and other matters tending to the welfare of the faithful. It is most certainly believed that many ceremonies still used in the Catholic Church, but nowhere commanded in Holy Writ, were then indicated to the Apostles and afterwards instituted by them.

Secondly, in regard to the place whence Christ ascended into Heaven, we learn from Holy Writ, that it was the Mount of Olives, about two thousand paces distant from Jerusalem. After our Saviour had frequently appeared to His disciples in Galilee, He told them to return to Jerusalem. There He manifested Himself to them at table and once more partook of their meal, that they might not only have a new proof of His resurrection, but also as a sign of His great love for them. St. Mark, the Evangelist, says that He also reproved them for their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they had at first refused to believe that He had risen from the dead. The reproof was also a mark of the Redeemer's love for His disciples, as by it He desired to strengthen them in their faith. After this, He went, accompanied by all present, from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives; but went by the way of Bethany, where Lazarus, Martha, and Mary Magdalen lived. To these He bade farewell, and they also accompanied Him to the mountain, that they might be present at His ascension. The Mount of Olives was the happy spot whence the Saviour ascended into heaven. He selected, not without reason, this and no other mount for His ascension: He had often repaired to it before His Passion, and had passed many hours, nay, frequently whole nights, in prayer upon this mountain. There His suffering began, when, in His agony unto death, the very sweat upon His brow turned into drops of blood. To instruct us, therefore, that continual prayer is needful to salvation, and that patient suffering is a sure road to heaven, the Saviour desired to ascend to eternal glory from that spot. Where we begin to bear our cross with submission, there we begin to ascend to heaven. So much of the place whence our Lord went into His kingdom.

The manner in which our Blessed Redeemer left this earth is as follows: When He, accompanied by His divine mother, His apostles and disciples, had reached Mount Olivet, He spoke for the last time to them, commanding them to return to Jerusalem and there await the arrival of the promised Holy Ghost. With the assurance that He would never forsake them, He comforted them and tenderly bade them farewell. St. Matthew writes that Christ spoke also the following words to His disciples: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth: go, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the

name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always, even to the consummation of the world." (Matth. xxviii.) St. Mark, in his Gospel, says: "And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover." (Mark, xvi.) What Christ further said to His apostles, to the other faithful, but especially to his blessed Mother, is not recorded. There is, however, no doubt that the most tender love was manifested; that all present adored Him with devotion and humility, gratefully expressed their thanks for the immeasurable love He had shown them, and congratulated Him on the glory which was awaiting Him in the Kingdom of His Father. The Lord, as St. Luke records, lifting up His hands, blessed them; and then ascended, though not by aid of the angels, nor in one rapid moment, as He might have done, but by His own power, slowly and gradually, in order the better to impress all those present, who numbered one hundred and twenty persons, with His ascension, and convince them of it for all future time. The rising Saviour was accompanied into heaven by the souls of all those just persons whom He had ransomed out of purgatory and limbo, and by numberless angels.

The feelings of the holy apostles and the other faithful on Mount Olivet may better be silently considered than described. Mute with surprise, they stood there and kept their eyes immovably upon the fading form of their beloved Redeemer, until a bright shining cloud surrounded Him and veiled Him entirely from their gaze. Still unable to withdraw their eyes from heaven, they were recalled to themselves by two men in white garments, that is, by two angels who appeared to them, and said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven." (Acts i.) Upon this, all returned to Jerusalem and prepared themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost. St. Luke writes that they went back to Jerusalem with great joy. The cause of this joy was, first: that they had seen Christ, their beloved Master, going so gloriously into heaven; secondly, that He had not only promised them His mighty assistance, but the Holy Ghost, as teacher and comforter; and,

lastly, because the Saviour had assured them that He went to prepare a place for them, thus giving them the hope of following Him into heaven, and becoming partakers of His glory. Now ought to be described the joy and exultation with which Christ was received in paradise by His Heavenly Father, and all the choirs of blessed Spirits, and to what great glory He was raised. But Holy Writ relates nothing circumstantial of the first, and of the second, St. Mark only says: "He was taken up into Heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God." In these words he indicates clearly that to Christ is given the highest power, the most exalted glory, and that He is perfectly equal to the heavenly Father. "He sitteth on the right hand of God," in other words, He is equally glorious with the Father, and, like Him, reigns with absolute power over all created beings.

It still remains to state some of the reasons why Christ ascended into heaven. Many of these we find in the works of the holy Fathers. The principal of them are the following: Christ went up into heaven, first, that His words to Pontius Pilate, saying that His kingdom was not of this world, might be verified; secondly, that His holy body, which had suffered so inexpressibly, might receive due glory and reward in heaven; thirdly, that He who had been humbled beneath every one on earth, might be exalted above all in Heaven. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names," says St. Paul (Philip ii.) fourthly, that He might open heaven, which Adam's sin had closed, and thus procure us entrance into it, in accordance with what He had said to His disciples: "And I shall go and prepare a place for you; I will come again, and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be" (John, xiv.) fifthly, that He might send to the apostles and all the faithful the Holy Ghost with all His heavenly gifts. "It is expedient to you that I go: for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you: but if I go, I will send him unto you" (John, xvi); and lastly, Christ ascended to heaven to become our mediator with the Father. "My little children," writes St. John, "these things I write to you, that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Just, who is the propitiation for our sins."

There now remains one point which I have not mentioned yet, but which I purposely left for the last. When Our Lord ascended from Mount Olivet into heaven, He left His footprints on the rock, where He had stood, to be a remembrance of Himself to us. From this, the conclusion is drawn that Christ, at

His ascension had His face turned to the west. These footprints are yet visible to-day, although thousands of pious pilgrims have taken small pieces from them to their homes. This continued miracle was mentioned in the time of Jerome, Paulinus and Bede. They write also that when the holy Empress Helena built a magnificent church over the place where those divine footprints were honored, the ceiling and roof just above them could not be closed together, but had to be left open, further, that when they wished to cover this place with a marble slab, it was always found cast aside by an invisible power.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

I. "Christ has gone to heaven. Let us therefore with all our mind and our heart, rise with Him, and we shall surely follow Him, bodily, on the day He has promised to us." With these words, St. Augustine, more than a thousand years ago, addressed his hearers on this festival. "But we ought to know, dear brethren," continued he, "that neither vanity, nor avarice, nor sensuality, nor any other vice, can enter heaven with Christ our Redeemer. Hence, if we desire to follow Our Lord in His Ascension, we must uproot all our sins." In another sermon, the same Saint teaches us that by conquering and destroying our own sins and evil inclinations, we can build for ourselves a ladder leading into heaven; that is, if we earnestly strive against our evil inclinations and drive all sin out of our hearts by true repentance. Let this lesson be of service to you; mount in your thoughts often into heaven, and by contemplating its glory, strive to avoid everything that might prevent you from entering it, and do all in your power that its gates may be open unto you. Shun sin, for it obstructs your entrance into heaven, and closes its gates against you: but if you have sinned, repent, for repentance is necessary to obtain heaven and re-opens its gates.

II. Christ our Lord has left us at His Ascension, His footprints in the rock, not only as a remembrance of His love, but also as an emphatic instruction, that if we want to go to heaven, we must follow his footprints, — His holy life.

"Christ has left you an example that you should follow his steps." writes St. Peter. (I. Peter, II.) The whole life of our Saviour consisted of working and suffering, which are the two foot-prints in which we must step, or the two principal points in which we must follow Him. Hence, whoever will go one day with Christ into heaven must work and suffer after His example. But in what manner has our Lord acted and worked? In what manner has He suffered? The first question He answers Himself: "For I do always the things that please him," namely, His heavenly Father. He did good without ceasing and exercised Himself most perfectly in good works and heroic virtues. To the second question the Gospel replies: He suffered poverty, pain, contempt, yes, even death itself—and all this, not only with the greatest patience, but with the fervent desire to suffer still more. How have you acted? Have you stepped in the footprints of Christ? have you followed His example?

<p>what have you suffered and how have you suffered it? Let your conscience reply to these questions. Endeavor, at least from to-day, to act and suffer after the example of your Saviour. For, I answer you, we must live as Christ lived, and bear our cross as He bore His, if we desire to partake of Heaven. "Gréat reward," says St. Gregory, "can be</p>	<p>obtained only by great labor and perseverance," and by sorrows and trials. Follow Christ in both points faithfully. How happy will you be when, at the close of your days, you can say with Job: "My foot has followed His steps. I have kept His way, and have not declined from it." (Job, xxiii.)</p>
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THE GREAT FESTIVAL OF PENTECOST.

Besides Easter, another feast was celebrated under the old Law, and was called Pentecost. It was instituted by God Himself, who also commanded that it should be most solemnly kept, in order that the Jews, at that period the true believing people of God, should always gratefully remember the benefit which they had received from the Most High, when, on the fiftieth day of their departure from Egypt, He gave them, through Moses, on Mount Sinai, the laws by which they were in future to regulate their lives. God ordained several sacrifices, which were yearly to be made to Him, at stated times, as is detailed in Holy Writ. The Holy Fathers are unanimously of opinion that our festival of Pentecost was instituted on the model of the same recorded in Holy Writ. The apostles themselves ordered that it should be most solemnly celebrated, so that the Christian people might forever remember, with gratitude, that the Almighty on that day, the fiftieth after the resurrection of the Redeemer, proclaimed at Jerusalem, on Mount Sion, the new Law, the law of love and grace, which makes us worthy to partake of the merits of the Saviour's sufferings, and thus leads us to life everlasting.

To comprehend all this better, it is necessary to know that Christ promised His disciples several times that He would send the Holy Ghost from heaven, who should instruct, comfort, and strengthen them to teach the Gospel all over the earth. Among other things, He said, in the last discourse to them before His Passion: "And I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever; the spirit of truth But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things." (John, xiv.) And again He says: "For, if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you: but if I go, I will send him unto

you I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth." (John, xvi.) Christ renewed this promise on the day of His glorious ascension, and commanded them all to return to Jerusalem and there await the coming of the Holy Ghost. "He commanded them," writes St. Luke, "that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard, said He, by my mouth. For, John, indeed, baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth." (Acts i.) Elsewhere, St. Luke writes that Christ said: "And I send the promise of my Father upon you: but stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on High." (Luke, xxiv.) This command was faithfully obeyed by the apostles; for they returned from Mount Olivet, where they had witnessed the Saviour's ascension, to Jerusalem, retired into an upper room of a house, and prepared themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost. The holy mother of Christ, and other pious women and disciples of the Lord were also with them. "All these," writes St. Luke, speaking of the apostles, "were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." (Acts, xiv.) When the tenth day after the Lord's ascension, the fiftieth after His resurrection, had come, and all those assembled in the hall, in number one hundred and twenty, were praying, the Holy Ghost descended upon them. St. Luke describes this event as follows: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak in divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." (Acts, ii.) These words contain much material for thought. The sudden sound as of a mighty wind from heaven was the herald of the coming of the Holy Ghost. It seemed to call the Jews, living at Jerusalem, to come and witness not only a new miracle in proof of the truth of all that Christ had taught, but also a public proclamation of the Gospel. This sound came from heaven, because it announced the coming of the Holy Ghost, whom Christ had promised to send from above. The sound arose suddenly, unexpectedly, in order that the miracle might be more incontestible, and that they all might comprehend that the Holy

Ghost comes at a time of His own choosing; hence that if we desire to receive Him, we must be prepared for His coming. For, as Our Lord says: "The Spirit breathes where he wills." (John, iii.) He also breathes when He wills. By the mighty wind, the attributes of the Holy Ghost and the effects He produces are described. The wind purifies the air and dries up all humidity. The Holy Ghost purifies the soul and destroys all lingering sinful inclinations. The wind sometimes induces men to walk more quickly, sometimes impedes their steps: all which depends on the point from which the wind comes, and that towards which the men walk. The Holy Ghost incites man to walk vigorously and cheerfully on the path of right, or to be more assiduous in the service of the Almighty. He also detains him, by an inner voice from pursuing the road leading to evil. The wind itself is not visible, but its effects are manifest. Thus we do not see the Holy Ghost, because He is a spirit; but we perceive distinctly His miraculous effects. The power of the wind is immense; it tears houses down, uproots mighty trees, causes the ground to tremble under our feet, without our being able to resist its force. Still greater is the power which the Holy Ghost exercises in overthrowing idolatry and infidelity; in the conversion of hardened sinners; in vanquishing the most bitter enemies of the Christian Church, as it is written: "And they"—the obdurate Jews—"were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit that spoke," namely, through the mouth of St. Stephen. (Acts, vi.)

In the above words is further to be considered the manner and form in which the Holy Ghost appeared. When Our Lord was baptized by St. John in the Jordan, He appeared in the form of a dove; but, on the festival we commemorate to-day, in the form of parted tongues of fire. Why He manifested Himself thus the holy Fathers explain as follows: first, the Holy Ghost appeared in the form of tongues, to signify that He would not conquer the world by the power of weapons; but, by instructions and sermons, He would prevail upon it to accept the new Law. These tongues were as of fire, to intimate that those receiving the Holy Ghost, inflamed by the fire of divine love, would also inflame others with the love of God. The nature and effect of fire lead us also to recognize the nature and effect of the Holy Ghost. For as fire mounts upwards, disperses darkness, softens steel, iron, and stones, thus does the Holy Ghost draw the souls of those to whom He comes upward to the contemplation of heavenly things; thus He disperses the darkness of error in the mind; thus He softens the sinner hardened in vice. As fire lightens and inflames, so does the Holy Ghost

enlighten man, that he may recognize all that is necessary to his salvation, or that may prevent his attaining it, and kindles in him the desire to live accordingly. He causes the fire of love to God to burn within him, or He increases it. These are the principal reasons why the Holy Ghost appeared in the form of fiery tongues. These tongues, we are told, were parted, and they descended upon the head of each one present. By this was manifested that the faithful, especially the apostles, should preach the Gospel, and speak to the people in different languages. The remaining of the tongues of fire was a sign that the Holy Ghost, according to the promise of Christ the Saviour, would not depart from the Church, but would abide with it evermore: "The Father shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever." (John, xiv.)

We will now proceed to consider the events which followed the coming of the Holy Ghost. St. Luke writes, that at that time, on account of the high festival of Pentecost, vast numbers of Jews from all nations were present at Jerusalem; especially from Rome, the island of Crete, Persia, Arabia, Egypt, Asia and Lybia. When the roar as of a mighty storm-wind was heard in the city, all the Jews, as well those residing at Jerusalem, as the foreigners, ran in great crowds towards the house, where the Apostles and disciples had received the Holy Ghost, to learn what had happened. The Apostles forthwith began to speak to them, and though the multitude were of different nations and of different languages, yet they all understood the Apostles, each one heard them speak in his own tongue, although they spoke in one language to all of them. This great and undeniable miracle amazed all exceedingly, and, as St. Luke records, they said among themselves: "Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? And how have we heard every man our own tongue wherein we were born? What meaneth this?" (Acts, ii.) Thus spoke most of them. Yet there were some who laughed and said mockingly that the Apostles were drunk with wine, and that their speeches were nothing but the effect of intoxication. St. Peter, as the head of the Apostles, would not forego the opportunity he had of announcing Christ as the true Messiah. Hence, raising his voice in order to be heard by all, he commenced a most memorable discourse. He refuted most emphatically those who accused him and others of drunkenness, and said that the prophecy of Joel had come to pass, who had foretold that God would pour out His spirit upon His sons and daughters. After this he proved to them that Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified but a short time before, was the true Messiah, promised by the Most High. He further assured

them that this Jesus was risen from the dead and had ascended into heaven, whence He, in accordance with His promise, had sent the Holy Ghost to the faithful. All this and more St. Peter spoke with such emphasis, that the listening Jews, feeling compunction, asked him and the other Apostles what they should do for their salvation. St. Peter answered: "Do penance and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts, ii.) This exhortation of the Apostle was followed by 3000 of his hearers, who were all baptized, and numbered with the disciples on that day.

This one fact alone is proof of the miraculous strength and power of the Holy Ghost—that it made of an unlearned man like Peter, in one instant, a most erudite and eloquent preacher; of a fearful and desponding disciple, a bold teacher and confessor of the Lord, who in a very short space of time converted a great number of embittered Jews, so that they recognized and worshipped Him as the true God and Redeemer, who not long since, at the instigation of their High Priests and Scribes, had died ignominiously on the Cross. It is well known how Peter fled from Mount Olivet, so as not to be regarded as a disciple of Christ, and perhaps taken prisoner. It is also known how he, at the house of Caiphas, out of fear of man, denied the Lord, and even swore that he knew Him not. And behold! to-day he presents himself voluntarily to an almost innumerable crowd of Jews, and says boldly and freely, neither fearing insult, nor wrong, nor even death itself, that He whom they had crucified was the true Messiah, so long promised by the Almighty. How great, how miraculous a change!

A similar change was observed in the other Apostles. They also, like Peter had fled, when Christ was seized, and as the Gospel relates, had hidden and locked themselves in a room for fear of the Jews. Now after having received the Holy Ghost they come forth, and walking fearlessly through the streets of Jerusalem, they proceed to the Synagogue and Temple, everywhere proclaiming that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah, that He had risen from the dead, and had ascended into Heaven, where He was sitting at the right hand of His Heavenly Father. All this they did fearlessly, although they knew how incensed the Jews, especially the Scribes and Pharisees, had been against Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore they must have been aware that they drew upon themselves, by their bold preaching, the greatest persecution, which in fact soon followed. They were summoned before the high priest, and not only forbidden to preach further of Christ, but threatened with severe

punishment if they disobeyed ; they were put in prison, scourged and persecuted in various ways ; but all this was not sufficient to intimidate them : they even preached more boldly than before, and evinced, according to Holy Writ, great joy that they were deemed worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. All these are evidences of the power of the Holy Ghost, whose coming the Catholic Church this day celebrates.

The following are, in a few words, the points which the Church commands us to believe in regard to the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is the third person of the Most Holy Trinity. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, without therefore being less than they, as some heretics blasphemously asserted. He is the same true God as the Father and the Son, as omnipotent, immense, and infinite in all perfections as they : hence we owe worship to Him, as well as to the Father and Son. Our sanctification by baptism, and afterwards, by partaking of the holy Sacraments, is ascribed to Him. All other graces that we have received from God are also ascribed to the Holy Ghost, as the source of all grace : hence it is evident how much we stand in need of Him, how anxious we ought to be for His coming and how solicitous for His remaining in us. When we received holy baptism, the Holy Ghost made us His dwelling, according to the words of the Apostle : " Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you ? " (1 Cor. iii.) From that moment he commenced to live with us ; but if we, in the course of time, committed sin, then we drove Him out of the dwelling which He had made in our heart, and the only way left to us, is to cleanse ourselves by true penance and thus prepare once more a fit temple in which He may dwell. If we make use of these means, the Holy Ghost will return to us, and, according to the promise of Christ, He will teach us wisdom and truth ; He will comfort us in sorrows and trials, and strengthen us when temptations assail us or our own weakness depresses us.

In conclusion, I will only add a few words concerning to-day's festival, in order to confirm the faithful in their belief. The feast of Pentecost belongs to Catholics only. Others have no part in it ; as the Holy Ghost came not down upon them but upon the Catholic Church only. For, the Holy Ghost descended upon the first Christian Church, upon the Church that was instituted by Christ. No other can be named as her founder. Neither can another Church be named, which Christ promised to build or found, except the Catholic Church. Eighteen hundred years give proof of the truth of this assertion, as there has been, from the time of Christ until now, no

Christian Church, which gives evidence of her existence by her teachings and the practice of the Christian doctrines, except the Catholic Church. It was she, and she alone, who was acknowledged by the Apostles and disciples of the Saviour; for in their Creed they placed these words: "The Holy Catholic Church." The word Catholic means, universal;—and the Holy Ghost came upon the Catholic Church, as the only universal, the only true Church, intended for all the nations of the earth. No church, which is not Catholic, can prove that she was the first Christian Church, or the church which Christ instituted, and of which the Apostles and the first Christians professed themselves members. Consequently, it was the Holy Catholic Church and none other, upon which the Holy Ghost descended.

From this we draw the conclusion, that the Catholic Church alone is the true Church of Christ, as the Holy Ghost, who could not descend upon a false church, came upon the Catholic Church only. It follows further, that the Holy Ghost has remained constantly with the Catholic Church, and will abide with her until time shall be no more: for, Christ more than once solemnly promised that the Holy Ghost, whom He would send, would remain for ever with the Apostles and His disciples, who represented the Church, and teach them all truth. If this has happened, which, as a promise of Christ cannot be doubted, it follows that the Catholic Church, which is admitted by even the non-Catholics, to have been at first the true Church of Christ, must still be the same and always will remain the same; whoever denies this, must necessarily say that the Holy Ghost did not remain with the true Church of Christ, or that He has not taught the truth, which is directly in opposition to the promise of the Saviour. Judge now yourself, my reader, what we shall think of those who say that the Catholic Church was at the beginning the true Church of Christ but afterwards fell into error, superstition and idolatry, and hence that it ceased to be the true Church of Christ. Those who speak thus call either Christ a liar, or the Holy Ghost a teacher of falsehood. One is as sacrilegious as the other. This will be sufficient for instruction and confirmation in the true faith.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. The Holy Ghost descended not only for the Apostles and first disciples of Christ, but also for you and all the faithful. He will also dwell in you, if you prepare your-</p>	<p>self rightly to receive Him, by penance and fervent prayer. By penance the heart must be purified from the spots of sin, for as the Holy Ghost is a pure Spirit, He can dwell</p>
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only in a pure heart. If after His coming, you again defile it with a mortal sin, He will leave you; and woe to you if you are forsaken by the Holy Ghost! And in regard to prayer, Christ has said, that His heavenly Father would give the good Spirit to them that ask Him. (Luke xi.) Pray therefore to God that He would give you His Holy Spirit and never take Him from you. David prayed for this in these words: "Take not thy holy spirit from me." (Ps. l.) According to the testimony of the Lord, the Holy Ghost has been sent into the world to teach the ignorant, to comfort the afflicted and to strengthen the feeble. Judge now yourself how much you are in need of this Spirit. Hence, call Him in the words of the Holy Church: "Come, Holy Ghost, and fill the hearts of Thy people!" Ask for comfort and strength; comfort in all sorrow and trial; strength in weakness and temptation; light and knowledge in doubt and ignorance. Pray to Him to lead you in the right path to heaven, that you may not go astray, misled by Satan, the world or the flesh. "Thy good spirit shall lead me into the right path," says David. (Ps. cxlii.)

II. Christ our Lord instituted the holy Sacrament of Confirmation, that the Christian may, through it, receive invisibly the Holy Ghost, who descended visibly upon the apostles. Therefore, the Bishops confer this Sacrament generally on the day of Pentecost. Those who receive it worthily will be strengthened in their faith and in their confession of it, as also in their fight against the Evil Spirit. "In baptism," says St. Peter Damian, "the Holy Ghost is bestowed upon us as a sign of forgiveness; in Confirmation, to strengthen us in battles." "The heroism of the holy Martyrs under the most cruel tortures has been looked upon as an evident effect of

this holy Sacrament. In our time, there is not often occasion to fight against visible tyrants as in ancient times; but we have to battle against the spirits of hell, who assail many, especially those who live among heretics, with temptations against faith. We have further to fight against the flesh and the iniquities of the world. Therefore we should highly esteem the holy Sacrament of Confirmation, and endeavor to receive it worthily. If we have received it already, we should frequently pray to God to make us partakers of the strength which it imparts, especially in those hours when we are in danger of losing our faith. To receive Confirmation worthily, we must be in a state of grace, and he who receives it when burdened with a mortal sin, commits the crime of sacrilege. So also does he sin greatly who receives it twice. It is wrong also to become a recipient of it without devotion and preparation, without giving due thanks to the Almighty, as is unhappily done by the generality of people, who, neither before nor after it, think of praying, but regard it little more than a mere ceremony. Parents, who are not solicitous that their children should be duly instructed before they receive this holy Sacrament, and who do not insist on their going to confession after they have completed their seventh year, commit great sin. Those also who lead others to Confirmation should be careful to see that the candidates have gone to confession and that their conduct during the ceremony is irreproachable; as they otherwise participate in the wrong which is done. Whoever has received Confirmation should examine his conscience to ascertain if he has complied with the above conditions for receiving it worthily, and if he finds himself at fault, he should repent, go to confession and pray God to

make him a recipient of the graces of this holy Sacrament, especially while fighting against the devil and the enemies of the true faith. "For a Christian is anointed, sanctified and confirmed, that he may bravely fight against the evil spirit." Thus speaks St Jerome.

THE SOLEMN FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY.

The mystery of all mysteries is presented to us to-day by the true Church of Christ, namely, the mystery of the Most Holy and undivided Trinity, to which we owe the deepest honor, love and devotion.

Our belief on this subject consists principally in the three following points: there is One true God, who rewards all good deeds and punishes all evil ones, either in this world or in the next; but there are, at the same time, three Persons, who according to Holy Writ, are called, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Each of these three Persons differs from the two others, namely the Father from the Son, the Son from the Father and the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost from Father and Son. This difference of Persons implies, however, no difference in their nature; for they all possess only one divine nature and essence. Each of these Persons is true God. True God is the Father: true God, the Son: true God, the Holy Ghost. But notwithstanding this, they are not three Gods, but One God; because all three Persons possess but one divine nature. In regard to men, we say that there are as many separate and distinct natures as there are persons; but in God, as St. Augustine teaches, we find a most perfect Unity in the Trinity, and a most perfect Trinity in the Unity: this means, there is only one God, but there are three Divine Persons. The Father is the first Person, the Son, the second, the Holy Ghost, the third. The Father has no beginning nor origin from either of the other Persons. The Son is born from all eternity, in an incomprehensible manner, of the Father, and the Holy Ghost, in an equally incomprehensible manner, proceeds from the Father and Son at the same time. And yet the Father is neither older nor higher than the Son, the Son not younger nor less than the Father, and the Holy Ghost not younger nor less than either the Father or the Son. It is true, Christ has said in the Gospel: "The Father is greater than I am:" but these words must be understood as spoken by Him in His human nature. The Father is

greater than Christ as Son of man; for as such, He is not from Eternity: as He took upon Himself human nature in time, that is at His Incarnation, nearly 2000 years ago. As far, however, as His divine nature is concerned, He is equally great and eternal as the Father; and as the Father is from all eternity, so the Son by his divine nature has no beginning. The same we believe and confess of the Holy Ghost: He exists equally from all eternity. What we believe of the eternal existence of these three divine Persons we must also believe of their other perfections, namely, of the omnipotence, omniscience, infinity and the other attributes of God. Omnipotent is the Father; omnipotent is the Son; omnipotent is the Holy Ghost. Omniscient is the Father; omniscient the Son; omniscient the Holy Ghost. Infinite is the Father; infinite the Son; infinite the Holy Ghost. Not one of these three Persons is above the other in might, wisdom, infinity, or any other perfection. One is immeasurably perfect as the other. But although each of the three Persons possesses the above named attributes, there are, nevertheless not three Gods thus perfect; as although each Person is true God, there are not three Gods, but only one; because the three Persons possess but one divine nature. The Son of God, the second Person, possesses, besides the divine nature, also the human nature, which He took upon Himself in the virginal body of Mary, and in which He suffered and died for us. He is true God and Man. This is what the true faith teaches us of the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity.

In the Old Testament this mystery was revealed to very few and only to the most beloved friends of God; in order, as the holy Fathers write, that the Jews, who were surrounded by heathens, and who were themselves prone to idolatry, should not have an opportunity to regard the three Persons as three Gods. The Prophets impressed them only with the truth that there was only one true God and that they must worship Him alone and not turn their thoughts to the idols of the heathens. But in the New Testament, the mystery of the Holy Trinity is revealed and announced in clear words. Not to mention many passages which have reference to this, let us only regard what Christ said to his Apostles: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In these words, Christ our Lord announced the three divine Persons, namely, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost: and at the same time their unity in one, as he does not speak in the plural, saying, in the *names*, but, in the *name*, in order to impress us with the truth, that the three Persons are but one God. To the above

cited words of the Saviour, we will add those of St. John: "And there are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one," namely, in their nature and essence. (John, v.) After the Gospel had been preached by the Apostles, many thousands of Jews and heathens believed this mystery, and to-day it is accepted in all parts of the Christian world, as an undoubted truth. It is certain that this mystery is far beyond all human comprehension, and there is no article in our faith which is more inexplicable. What is told in regard to it of St. Augustine is well known. This holy teacher while occupied in searching into the mystery of the Holy Trinity, took a walk on the sea-shore, where he found a boy, who having made a small hole in the sand, poured water from the sea into it with a spoon. After watching the boy for a long time, the Saint asked him what he was doing. "I wish," replied the boy, "to pour the sea into this hole." "O my child!" said the Saint: "that is a useless attempt. So small a hole cannot contain the immense sea." "And you," replied the boy, "will be still less able to contain and comprehend, with your human understanding, the stupendous mystery of the Holy Trinity!" After these words, the child, who doubtless was an angel, vanished. Truly this mystery is inconceivable and fathomless; yet we do right, nay more, we are bound under pain of damnation to believe it, as it is taught by Him, who can neither deceive, nor be deceived, as He is Himself eternal and infallible truth. God himself revealed it to us, and this is and must be sufficient for us to cast aside all doubts. Our understanding must, according to the exhortation of St. Paul, submit and become a prisoner in the service of faith. For, the words of God must be true, whether we comprehend them or not. And finally, why do we wonder that we are unable to fathom so great a mystery, when there are so many natural things which our understanding fails to explain? Besides, God does not command us to understand, but to believe it. "Believing is commanded to me," writes St. Augustine. "To search into the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and to wish to comprehend it," says St. Bernard, "is presumption; but to believe it is godliness." Elsewhere, he writes these memorable words: "If any one asks how the Catholic faith in regard to this point can be true, I answer, that it should be enough for any one to believe that it is so. If any one goes further and attempts to explain what he is only expected to believe, he places himself in danger of losing his faith and with it his salvation." This was indeed the fate of many who, by their impertinent pondering, came at last so far that they protested against and denied the Most Holy Trinity.

It is unquestionable that there was no article of faith which in the early centuries was so much assailed as this one. The Jews would not admit of Three Persons in the Divinity; the heathens maintained the plurality of Gods. Some heretics professed only one Person; others denied the Divinity of Christ; and again others the Divinity of the Holy Ghost. There were some who said that the three Persons were only different names; while others taught that one Person was greater than the other, &c. The Arians, who contested the divinity of Christ, caused the greatest disturbance, the greatest evil in the Church of God, on account of their inveigling many bishops and several emperors into their false doctrines. They persecuted the Catholics, especially bishops and priests, as cruelly, and in some places, more cruelly than the heathens had done. It is known that many thousands of Catholics confirmed with their blood their faith in the Holy Trinity and in the Divinity of Christ, during the persecution of the Church by the Arians. We read also of many astonishing miracles which God at that time wrought to confirm the truth of the Catholic Faith. In the last few centuries, almost all the errors of the ancient heretics have been renewed by the followers of Luther and Calvin, both of whom assailed the word "Trinity," and would not tolerate it. The old Catholic prayer, "Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy upon us," both rejected. The bible of Luther does not contain the important text of St. John: "There are three who give testimony, &c." He left these words out, because they lead to the conclusion that we have to believe in the Holy Trinity. Calvin taught that the words: "These three are one," were not to be applied to their unity in nature, but only to their conformity of will. What is to be concluded from this, I leave to others to find out. The more, however, the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity was assailed by the heretics, the more it was protected and defended by the Catholic Church. The Holy Mass begins daily with the sign of the Cross, the use of which is an emphatic confession of the Holy Trinity and an appeal to the same. This sign of the Cross is made several times during the day by all true Catholics, and as often as it is made, so often is the Holy Trinity acknowledged and honored. The same is done in holy Mass by the repeated Kyrie Eleison, and further by the Angelic song of praise: "Glory be to God on high:" by the Credo, or Nicene Creed, and lastly by the Sanctus, three times repeated; Holy, holy, holy! The prayers ordained by the Catholic Church, as well for holy Mass, as for all other occasions, all end with a confession of the Holy Trinity and an invocation to the same. All hymns of praise, used in the daily office of the priests and in

other devout exercises end in the same manner. As often as the priest, during holy mass, or on other occasions, blesses the people, or things for the benefit of man, so often he invokes and confesses the only true God in three Persons. Every litany begins with this invocation and acknowledgment. After every Psalm is the Holy Trinity praised and honored with the well known words: "Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, &c." All this, and much more, has the Catholic Church ordained to honor the Holy Trinity; and to the same end she instituted to-day's Festival. She requires that we celebrate it most solemnly, that we not only renew our confession of faith in the most Holy Trinity, praise and worship the only true God in three divine Persons, but also give due thanks for all the benefits granted us. One of the reasons that the first Sunday after Pentecost was chosen for this celebration, lies in the fact that the mystery of the Holy Trinity as the principal article of our faith, was not publicly preached by the Apostles until after the Holy Ghost had descended upon them. The Lutherans celebrate to-day's festival with us, although this was instituted by a Pope, John XXII., and is not of such ancient date as many other feasts. Why, therefore, do they not also celebrate other feasts of the Catholic Church instituted by other Popes, and of much older date? They have again admitted into their bible the verse of St. John, which Luther had left out; but what is the reason that they do not eradicate so many errors with which their Bible is filled? The Lutherans also believe in One God and three Persons in the Holy Trinity, although this is an incomprehensible mystery, and it seems impossible to the human understanding that each Person is true God and yet all three only one God. Why, believing this, do they deny other articles of faith, especially that of the presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ? Why do they say, in regard to it, that it is impossible? Because they are unable to comprehend it. But the same God, who revealed the mystery of the Holy Trinity, has also revealed the other, and has commanded that we should believe the one as well as the other, under pain of eternal damnation. Whoever denies the presence of Our Lord in the blessed Sacrament, or the change of the bread and wine because it is incomprehensible, will surely soon be led to deny the greatest Mystery of them all, that of the Holy Trinity, because it is much more unfathomable! And it is just this which the Evil One tries to accomplish through heresy, in order to overthrow the pillars of the Christian faith.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

You have learned the three-fold intention of the Holy Church in regard to the institution of this day's festival. Endeavor to regulate your devotions accordingly. First: renew and confess publicly your faith in the great and incomprehensible mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Be zealous in the exercises of your religion and promise before God that you will live and die in it. Make with especial devotion and attention the sign of the holy Cross, which is an emphatic confession of your belief in the Holy Trinity, and form the resolution to avail yourself of it without hesitation, according to ancient custom, publicly on all proper occasions, especially before and after prayers. Secondly: exert to-day all your strength in honor and praise of the Holy Trinity. Worship the same with the deepest humility and reverence. Invite, after the example of David, and the three companions of Daniel, not only all angels and men, but also all other created beings, to join you in praising and exalting the Holy Trinity. Say from the depth of your heart, in unison with the true Church: "Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost." "Praised and blessed be the holy and undivided Trinity, now and for all eternity." Or with the heavenly Choir; "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Sabaoth." If you have done all this, still acknowledge that your God deserves infinitely more praise, honor and glory than all created beings can bestow upon Him during all eternity. Thirdly: recall to memory the many and great blessings which have been granted to you during your life by the Holy Trinity, and endeavor to give due thanks for them. The heavenly Father has created you,

the Son has redeemed you, the Holy Ghost has sanctified you. For these and other numberless benefits, offer to-day humble thanks. Offer to the Holy Trinity in grateful acknowledgement, all the good deeds which have been done until now on earth and which will be done until the last day arrives: especially the many Masses which have been said and will yet be said: for by them the Holy Trinity is more honored than by all the praises of men and angels. In conclusion, recite the well-known hymn of praise; "Great God we praise thee!" or "Te Deum laudamus, &c."

Finally, let the frequent invocation of the Holy Trinity, according to the precept of the true Church, be recommended to you. To invoke the Saints and the Blessed Virgin is agreeable to God and beneficial to men; but the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity, the invocation of God is commanded. Hence we should frequently resort to it. The non-Catholics are wrong in declaring the invocation of the Saints vain, wicked and even idolatrous. It would, however, be wrong, if Catholics neglected the invocation of the Holy Trinity. The true Church teaches us, at the beginning of the litany, to invoke the three divine Persons, each separately, and afterwards, all three together under the name of Holy Trinity, and not until then, does she call on the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. She does not teach that we should turn to the Saints oftener and with more confidence than to God; much less that we should invoke them instead of the Almighty, as many non-Catholics assert, either in ignorance or malice. May you follow the precepts and teaching of the true Church. Pray frequently to the Holy Trinity, in the words: "Holy

Trinity, One God, have mercy on us!" Say this with so much greater devotion as the non-Catholics, after the example of Luther, have dispensed with this ancient prayer. And why? They rejected first the invocation of the Saints; consequently, perhaps, it is not allowed to invoke the Holy Trinity! Abhor so scandalous an error, and say, with mouth and heart: "Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us!" Add, if you choose, the beautiful words of St. Gregory Nazianzen: "I will not become faithless to Thee, eternal Father; I will not become faithless to Thee, O only-begotten Son! I will not become faithless to Thee, O Holy Ghost; I know whom I confessed at the time of holy baptism, whom I rejected, and to whom I devoted and submitted myself."

THE FESTIVAL OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

The same reason which caused the Festival of the Holy Trinity, induced the Catholic Church to institute the festival of Corpus Christi, which we celebrate to-day. She requires that we shall confess and renew to-day the faith which we have in the Blessed Eucharist, and that we bestow all possible honors upon the Most Holy Sacrament and give due thanks to our Saviour for its institution. In order that this just requirement of the Church may be more fully complied with, we shall here give some explanation of the above reasons. In regard to the first reason, the following are the facts, which the church especially desires to call to our memory by this joyous festival. Our dear Saviour, on the same evening when His bitter suffering for the redemption of man began, instituted the Blessed Eucharist, out of His immeasurable love for us. In it He is truly and substantially present with body and soul, with flesh and blood, as God and Man, under the form of bread and wine. Under the form of bread, not only His holy body, but also His holy blood is present; because a living body cannot exist without blood. Hence he receives it, who partakes of holy communion only in the form of bread, not less than he who receives it in two forms, as the priests, when they say holy Mass. The latter partake of holy communion under two forms, in order that the passion and death of our Saviour, during which His blood flowed from His wounds, might be more vividly represented. From the moment that the priest speaks the prescribed holy words, in the name of Christ, over the bread and wine, the Lord is present in the Holy Sacrament. Bread and wine change their substance miraculously into the true body and blood of the Saviour, in such a manner, that all that remains of the bread and wine is their form, color

and taste. The presence of Christ lasts so long as the bread and the wine are unconsumed. It is further to be considered that our Lord is present in a small host as well as in a large one, as well in a portion of a host as in a whole one. Hence he who receives an entire host, has no more than he who receives only a part of one, the latter has just as much as the former. The same is the case with those who by inadvertence receive more than one Host, while others receive only one. It is only to be remarked that in case a consecrated Host is broken or divided, the holy body of the Saviour is not broken nor divided, but the form of the bread only: even as Christ will not again die, so his holy body can neither be broken nor divided. All these points are articles of faith in the Catholic Church, and are explained in sermons, in religious instructions and in many books, and are especially demonstrated by the word of God. All true Catholics believe this without any doubt, as the Almighty, who is eternal and infallible truth, has revealed it, and as that Church assures us, which on account of the assistance of the Holy Ghost, promised to her by Christ, cannot err.

Those who are not Catholics teach in many points quite differently. They especially reject the real presence of Christ in the form of bread and wine, and also the transubstantiation of these latter into the real body and blood of the Lord. They maintain it to be impossible that bread and wine can be changed into the body and blood of Christ, or that Christ can be really present at the same time, in so many different places, in so small a compass as the holy Host. If we ask them why they consider it impossible, they answer: "because we cannot conceive, cannot comprehend, how it can be possible." But if they believe impossible all which they cannot understand, they must, besides many other articles of faith, reject the creation of the world; the humanity and resurrection of Christ; the Holy Trinity; because all these are just as inconceivable for the mind of man, as the transubstantiation of the bread and wine and the substantial presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. It matters not in articles of faith whether we are able to comprehend them or not, so long as they are revealed by God. That which the Almighty has revealed must be true, whether I can understand it or not: for He is omniscient, hence infallible, and cannot be deceived, while our understanding can as easily be deceived as our senses. God is truth: therefore can not deceive. He is omnipotent; hence He can do more than the human mind can comprehend. "With God all things are possible," said Christ Himself. "Let us admit that God can do more than we are able to fathom," says St. Augustine, while St. Cyril of Alexandria

writes; "The Lord says by the prophet Isaías: 'My counsel is not like yours, neither are my ways like your ways: for as the heaven is above the earth, so are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.' Cannot therefore the works of Him, who stands so high above us in wisdom and power, exceed in their greatness the limits of our understanding?" The same is taught by all the Holy Fathers. They also refer to many occurrences in nature, which, although we cannot comprehend them, nevertheless take place. They speak of the creation of the world, and say, if we believe that God created a whole world out of nothing, how can we hesitate to believe that He can change bread and wine, or that He can be present in that form? The water at Cana was changed into wine: why then should He not possess the power to transform bread and wine into His holy body and blood? Truly, whoever believes that God is omnipotent, infallible and infinite, cannot doubt this article of faith. We Catholics believe so, and hence we cannot doubt any of the above mentioned points of the true faith. This faith we this day renew and confess publicly. The Catholic Church requires it, and has for this reason instituted to-day's Festival. She further demands that we unanimously bestow to-day all possible honor upon the Blessed Sacrament, and that we praise and glorify with all the powers of our soul, the Saviour therein concealed. And is not this justly demanded of us? of us who firmly believe that our Lord is present in His double nature as God and as man, in the Blessed Sacrament? All honor, all praise belongs to the true God. King David, in the Old Testament, bestowed great honor upon the Ark of the Covenant, in which a part of the manna was preserved, as Holy Writ relates. The manna of the Old Testament was only a feeble type of our Most Holy Sacrament, as Christ Himself teaches: hence we owe so much greater honor to it. The wise man said, many thousand years ago: "Glorify the Lord, as much as you can... Bless ye the Lord, exalt him as much as you can." (Eccl. xliii.) As we are assured by our faith that our God and Lord is truly and substantially present in the Blessed Sacrament, it is natural that we honor, praise and glorify Him with all our strength. We are bound to do this not merely to-day, but during the whole year. Who is there, however, that can say of himself that he has not sometimes been remiss in this sacred duty? Hence the Holy Church requires that we, remembering our duty this day, kindle anew our zeal, if it has abated, and thus with united hearts, honor, praise and exalt the Most Holy Sacrament. For this purpose she has also ordained that the Blessed Sacrament shall be carried

through the streets in solemn processions. Everything connected with this ceremony is intended to honor our Lord in every possible manner. The Church tries, by this public manifestation, to atone somewhat for the many and great wrongs to which the Blessed Sacrament is so frequently subjected by heretics as well as by Catholics. One cannot, without horror, think how this sacred mystery has been assailed and dishonored in centuries gone by, and down to our days. A pious Christian dares not even relate the wrongs done to it, which are great enough to deserve hell. And what does our Saviour, concealed in the Blessed Sacrament, suffer from those who believe in his presence? The irreverence and levity with which many Christians conduct themselves in presence of the Blessed Eucharist, tend to dishonor and disgrace our Saviour. The unworthy communions which unhappily take place, offend Him in a most grievous manner. The misuse of the body, especially of the tongue and mouth, which are so often sanctified by partaking of the true body and blood of Christ, cannot but excite the wrath of the Lord. For these, as well as other wrongs done to the Blessed Sacrament, the Church of Christ seeks to make amends by these solemn processions, and by all the other pious exercises she has ordained for this festival and during the whole octave. Hence, every pious Christian should be solicitous to conform to the ordinances of the Church, and not only assist in the procession and all other devout exercises, but also endeavour to contribute to render them what the Church desires.

Those who are not Catholics disapprove of every thing that we do to-day in honor of the blessed Sacrament, and accuse us of idolatry, as we, according to them, worship bread. They say also that all that we do in this regard cannot be agreeable to God, because it was not ordained by Him. We, Catholics, are, however, not disturbed by this, for we know that we do not worship bread, but Him whom three wise men worshipped in the manger, namely, Jesus Christ, true God and Man. We know also that though what we do this day in honor of the blessed Sacrament is not especially and expressly ordained in Holy Writ, still we are assured that a voluntary worship of it is in accordance with reason and the laws of God, pleasing and agreeable to His Majesty. And this is made clear to us from the above-mentioned example of the three Wise Men, and from the acts with which King David honored the Most High, on the solemn return of the Ark of the Covenant; not to mention that Christ gave us a general command to worship God, in the words: "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore and him only shalt thou serve." (Matth. iv.) This command we

fulfil to-day by our actions, as they all aim at one end, namely, the honor of the Lord, who is concealed in the Blessed Sacrament. The more we are blamed and derided by the heretics for our adoration of the Holy Eucharist, the more fervent should we become in our zeal. When King David was derided by Michol, on account of his devotion at the return of the Ark of the Covenant, he said: "Before the Lord who chose me I will both play and make myself meaner than I have done, and I will be little in my own eyes." (II. Kings vi.)

We will still add in a few words, what the true Church further demands of us. We to-day give humble thanks to the Lord for the institution of the Blessed Eucharist. This is no more than our duty: for if we are obliged to thank God for the smallest benefit He confers upon us, we are surely under much greater obligation when the benefit is great and of especial importance. Who can tell, who can comprehend the greatness of the benefit, which Christ our Saviour and Lord bestowed upon us by the institution of the Blessed Eucharist. It is as great as it is unfathomable: great as He who devised it; as Christ our Lord, true God and man, the King of all Kings, the Lord of all who reign. Great and inconceivable is the miracle by which the substance of bread and wine is changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, and the miraculous presence of the Lord in the form of bread and wine. St. Thomas of Aquin calls the Blessed Sacrament a miracle, and the greatest that Christ ever wrought. Inexpressibly great must have been the love which induced the Saviour not only to institute it at the time He chose for it, namely, the evening before His Passion. Since the world was created, there has never been found a parent willing to nourish his children with his own body, much as he may have loved them. Such excess of love Christ alone manifested. "Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end," writes St. John (John, xiii.). Already had He loved them and had given them many indubitable proofs of His love; but at the end of His life, He gave them one which surpassed all others, namely, having nourished them with His own body and blood, He instituted a sacrament, by means of which all the faithful might partake of this divine food. And when did He institute this? St. Paul writes: "In the night when He was delivered into the hands of the embittered Jews." The last night of His life was approaching, and the time when his enemies would seize Him, scourge Him most cruelly, crown Him with thorns, and nail Him like the greatest malefactor to the Cross. All this was known to the Lord. He knew also the wrong which would be done to Him in the

Blessed Eucharist to the end of time; and yet this was not sufficient to prevent Him from instituting it. Truly, a love which surpasses all the bounds, not only of human, but angelic understanding. Love seeks to be always with the loved ones and to enjoy their presence. Jesus Christ, who out of love to us had descended from heaven upon earth, had remained with us for 33 years: and it was the will of His heavenly Father that, after having accomplished our Redemption, He should return to heaven. This also took place; but His infinite love for us found a means by which He will remain with us in the world until the end of time. This means is the Blessed Sacrament, which He instituted before the commencement of His bitter passion. In it He is God and Man, as He is in heaven, truly and substantially present in every Church where the Blessed Sacrament is kept. By this same blessed Sacrament, He unites Himself most closely with us, when we partake of it, because He gives Himself to us as food, and nourishment. And this union with us is, according to the opinion of the Holy Fathers, a still greater proof of His love for us, than His presence in the Sacrament. It is the property of love to unite closely those who love one another: can there be a more intimate union than ours is with Christ, by virtue of the Holy Sacrament? When Christ became man, He united His divine nature, in an incomprehensible manner, with humanity. When we partake of the Blessed Eucharist, He unites His divine and human natures with our nature, although not in the same manner as when He became Man. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood," says He, "abideth in me, and I in him." (John, vi.) How wonderful a union! How incomprehensibly great a love!

Besides the love which induced our Lord to institute the Most Holy Sacrament, the end for which He instituted it, and with which we have already become partly acquainted, is also great and most excellent. Our adorable Saviour would leave us in it an eternal memorial of His love and of His bitter passion and death, as His own words make clear to us: "Do this for a commemoration of me." (Luke, xxii.) He desired to remain constantly with us, in order that we might, in all our cares, go to Him with greater confidence, and opening our hearts to Him, request and receive from Him, comfort, strength and help. It was His wish that His holy flesh and blood should nourish and strengthen our souls. This was the intention, the end and aim of our Lord in instituting the Most Holy Eucharist. As the religion He founded is holy and most perfect, and as no true religion can exist without sacrifice, He would leave us for evermore the most divine sacrifice, namely, His own flesh and blood

that we might sacrifice it in holy Mass in honor of the Majesty of God, as a thanks-offering for all graces and benefits bestowed upon us; for the pardon of our sins, for the obtaining of new grace, and for the comfort of all, living and dead. How high, how admirable an end and aim! Had Christ been willing to remain among us, in the Blessed Eucharist, only in one place on earth, in order that we might there lay our burdens more trustingly at His feet, He would then have conferred on us a favor, which we could never sufficiently esteem, and for which we could never be sufficiently thankful. How much greater, therefore, is the grace that He dwells among us in so many different places of the world, to nourish our souls and to serve as sacrifice, and this not once only, but as often as we desire. How inexpressibly great a favor! How wonderful an invention of truly Divine love!

Just as great and excellent are the results of the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord expressed it all in a few words when he said: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." (John, vi.) Which means: Whoever worthily partakes of this holy Sacrament, shall receive the special grace of God to preserve the life of his soul, or to remain in the sanctifying grace of God, and hence obtain life everlasting. By virtue of this Sacrament, man receives strength to abstain from sin, to resist temptation and to serve the Most High with constant fidelity. Therefore it is called by the Council of Trent, a medicine, by the strength of which we are freed from our daily iniquities, and protected and guarded against great crimes. "This divine mystery," says Albert the Great, "strengthens man in grace and succors him when he is in danger of committing sin." The pious Thomas à Kempis writes: "This most holy and venerable Sacrament conduces to the well-being of body and soul. It is the remedy for spiritual weakness. It heals the wounds of vice, it keeps within bounds all evil inclination, it conquers temptations, gives more abundance of grace, multiplies virtue, strengthens faith, augments hope, and inflames love." Other teachers say, that Christ instituted the Blessed Sacrament under the form of a bodily food, that we might more easily perceive its effects. For, as bodily food preserves the life of the body, renews strength, refreshes man: thus is the spiritual life of the soul preserved by the holy Eucharist, the soul is strengthened, and all the inner faculties of man inflamed with new zeal in the service of the Almighty. The true Church has not hesitated, for causes already mentioned, to call it a pledge of future glory, so that those who worthily partake of Holy Communion, receive, so to speak, an assurance of eternal salvation. I say, who

partake worthily of the Holy Communion; for, one who receives it when not in the state of grace, will not only fail to share in the benefits it imparts, but becomes guilty of eternal punishment, according to the words of St. Paul: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself" (1 Cor. xi.) that is, as St. Chrysostom and other holy fathers teach, damnation. Whoever reflects on what we have said, cannot but come to the conclusion, that the Lord, by instituting the Blessed Eucharist, has bestowed upon us an inexpressibly great gift. Hence, it is only our duty to give Him our most humble thanks, to which effect the Church has ordained to-day's festival, demanding of us to give thanks to the Lord for the institution of this Blessed Gift.

So much for the reason which gave rise to the ordinance of the festival of Corpus Christi. Only one point must I yet touch upon, to confirm the true faith and at the same time give an instruction. The non-Catholics maintain that we act wrongly in not administering the Blessed Sacrament in two forms, as Christ our Lord instituted it and commanded it to be partaken of in such a manner. To this I answer, Luther himself more than once said that the real Blessed Eucharist was to be found in the Catholic Church; and that it mattered not whether it is administered under one form or under two. It is true that Christ instituted it in two forms, but that He commands all to receive it in two forms is false. From the act of the institution of the Eucharist this cannot be proved: for, Christ instituted and administered it after washing his disciples' feet. He gave it only to the men, the strong, and this after they had partaken of supper, and yet the non-Catholics do not say that it is a commandment to wash the feet before Holy Communion, or administer it only to men, the strong, and after supper. The non-Catholics may rest assured that we are more favored when we partake of Holy Communion in one form than they, even if they received it in a hundred: for we receive under one form really the flesh and blood of Christ, while they, under two forms, neither partake of the Saviour's holy flesh nor of His blood, because they possess no priests to whom Christ gave power to consecrate.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

<p>I. You have considered the aim and end of to-day's festival and also the reasons that gave rise to it: hence, prepare your devotions accordingly. First, exercise yourself to-</p>	<p>day in the virtue of faith. Confess to God and the whole world that you believe everything that God the Lord has revealed of the Blessed Eucharist, and which His true</p>
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Church explains to you; and that you will believe it for no other reason than because the infallible truth has revealed it. Confess openly, that you willingly give your reason up in the service of the Almighty. Oppose, in advance, all temptations by which the Evil One might endanger the peace of your soul, during your life, or while on your death-bed in regard to the Blessed Eucharist or other articles of faith. Manifest openly the faith which you bear in your heart and be not ashamed of it in the presence of heretics. Hence, accompany the procession to-day with due reverence, and assist, to-day and always, in all public devotions ordained in honor of the Holy Eucharist. In the churches where the Blessed Sacrament is kept, show your faith in the presence of the Lord by your modesty and reverence. Whoever is wanting in this is wanting also in faith.

Secondly, endeavor especially to-day to honor, with every power of your soul, the Most Holy Sacrament, but let not your devotion cease with this day: continue in it as long as your life lasts. Accompany the Holy Eucharist devoutly when it is carried in processions; frequently visit the churches where it is kept; worship it in deepest humility. Assist at Holy Mass, if possible, daily. Receive the Holy Communion as often as your confessor will permit; but always with a heart purified and adorned by exercises of virtue. Take time for devotions before and after Holy Communion. Guard yourself in the presence of the Holy Sacrament, from everything that might be displeasing to Him who is concealed in it: as, unrestrained roving of the mind and eyes; the volubility of the tongue; irreverent manner, &c. Take care that you do not, by using indecent language, soil your tongue which has been purified by partak-

ing of the Holy Sacrament. Before all things, however, take care that you do not receive the Holy Eucharist while a mortal sin weighs upon your soul, for this would be the greatest insult, the most frightful disgrace to your loving Jesus, and to you it might bring eternal damnation. Beg your Saviour also to pardon every irreverence of which during your past life, you have been guilty in presence of the Blessed Sacrament, or in your Communions. To this end, offer to Him everything that is done in the whole world to-day and during the entire Octave, to His honor and glory, and make the firm resolution to amend all your faults by redoubled zeal in honoring the holy Sacrament.

Thirdly: In consideration of the infinite benefit which our Lord has conferred upon us in instituting the Blessed Eucharist, return Him your most fervent thanks. Give thanks to Him that He made you a member of that Church, which alone is in possession of the Blessed Eucharist. Thank Him also that He gives you time and opportunity to partake frequently of the Holy Sacrament. And as everything connected with it is great and holy, so on your side, all in regard to it should be great and holy. Great must be your faith in the real presence of Christ; great your zeal to worship Him; great your reverence for the church in which He dwells; great your devotion to Him in the Sacrament; great your preparation to receive it. Let all the powers of your mind be directed towards one end: cleanse your soul from every stain of sin, and adorn it most beautifully by exercises of virtue, to make it a fit dwelling for your Saviour. When King Solomon was about to erect a temporal dwelling for the Most High, he collected gold and silver, precious stones and other treasures, saying: "I have prepared,

according to my strength, all that is necessary for the dwelling of my Lord." Why? He gives his reason in the following words: "For, it is a great work, because we erect a house, not for man, but for God." (I. Par. 29.) Through Holy Communion, your soul becomes a much more real temple of God than the Temple which Solomon erected:

hence your care in preparing this dwelling should be much greater than that of Solomon. Finally, great should be your solicitude, after Holy Communion, to remain with Christ in your heart, and to thank, praise and love Him. Oh! exert all the powers of your soul; "for it is a great work!"

THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

CELEBRATED ON FRIDAY AFTER THE OCTAVE OF "CORPUS CHRISTI."

Whoever knows and loves Jesus, whoever understands the perfection of His virtues, and the tenderness of His charity for us, will certainly love and honor His Divine Heart. And, hence, we may truly say, that the devotion to the Sacred Heart is as old as Christianity itself; for, it is nothing but devotion to Jesus in the spiritual treasury of His holiness and love.

This treasury was opened to us on Calvary, where the foundation, as it were, of the particular devotion to the Divine Heart was laid. One of the soldiers opened Jesus' side with a lance, says the Evangelist St. John, (chap. xix.) The Fathers of the Church, and especially St. Augustine, in explaining these words, remark correctly, that the holy Evangelist designedly uses the word "opened." For, it would seem much more natural to say that a soldier "pierced" the side of our Saviour. But the beloved disciple, who had laid his head on his Master's bosom at the Last Supper, and there penetrated the mysteries of His Divine Heart, had a particular design when he made use of the expression: "A soldier opened his side." He wished to intimate to us that according to the decrees of Divine Providence, the side of Jesus was pierced, only in order to give us access to His Divine Heart.

For this reason, likewise, the Saints from the very beginning of Christianity, have everywhere manifested great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, who, enlightened by Jesus, knew, better than other Saints, the divine efficacy and inexhaustible treasures of this devotion, requires all the faithful to be united in this Divine Heart. The holy Fathers, with St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom, con-

sider the Heart of Jesus as the birthplace of the Church. St. Augustine compares Christ with Adam. He says that as Eve, the mother of all the living, was taken from the side of Adam during his sleep, so the Church was formed of the blood and water pouring from the wound of His Heart, when He, the second Adam, was in the sleep of death on the cross. The writings of the most celebrated Doctors of the Church, as those of St. Bernard, St. Peter Damian, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure and St. Alphonsus are animated with the most tender affection towards the Sacred Heart. "Thy Heart, O Jesus," writes the eloquent St. Bernard, "is a treasure, a costly jewel. I will give everything, my thoughts, desires and inclinations to it." "I will hasten," exclaims St. Bonaventure, "to His Heart, and obtain whatever I desire." Many of the most renowned Saints of the Church of God cherished a peculiar devotion to the Divine Heart, as appears from the history of their lives, as: St. Francis of Assisium, St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, St. Philip Neri, St. Francis of Sales, St. Aloysius, St. Clare, St. Gertrude, St. Mechtildis, St. Catharine of Sienna, St. Rose of Lima, St. Teresa, St. Magdalen of Pazzi, and many others.

But, though this devotion is by no means new, nevertheless it has of late become more generally spread, so that the *manner* in which it is now practised, is a grace which God had reserved for our own time. The Almighty seems to have set apart for these times of coldness and indifference, this new form of the devotion to rekindle and keep alive the love of God, almost extinguished in the hearts of men. But God frequently accomplishes great results through the agency of instruments seemingly weak and powerless. He chose a holy and humble virgin, unknown to the world, to disseminate the life-giving devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of His Son. This virgin was the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, a sister of the Order of the Visitation in France, who, after having been miraculously tried and proved, became distinguished by the extraordinary graces which she received from God in order to spread the devotion to the Sacred Heart. It is related in her life that once, on the feast of St. John the Evangelist, as she was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, entirely inflamed with divine love, our Saviour appeared to her and showed her His Divine Heart, as it were, on a throne, surrounded with flames, transparent as crystal, and brighter than the sun; it was encircled with thorns and surmounted by a cross. The wound which He had received on the cross was open. "Behold," said Jesus to her, "behold the Heart which has loved men so much, that it has spared nothing, nay, has even exhausted itself, in order to show its love. But, instead of

being grateful, the generality of mankind repay me with ingratitude, by the disrespect, contempt and insult which they offer to the Most Holy Sacrament of my Love."

In order, however still more clearly to manifest His intention to introduce this devotion and spread it everywhere, Jesus showed her His glorious Heart a second time, on the 16th of June, 1675, when she was absorbed in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, and commanded her to exert herself earnestly to obtain a particular feast in honor of the Sacred Heart, on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi. He promised, at the same time, "that He would bestow plentiful graces on those who would practise this devotion;" and declared, "that this devotion was His last attempt to inflame, in these latter times of the Church, the hearts of men with divine love, and render them worthy of divine mercy."

The holy servant of God related this to her confessor, Father Claude de la Colombière, of the Society of Jesus, who, after mature consideration and strict examination, was convinced of the truth of this revelation, and the usefulness of such a devotion, and, during the remainder of his life, zealously strove to propagate it.

In order to show the more clearly the holiness of this devotion, God permitted it to meet at first with great opposition. This caused the pastors of the Church to subject it to the most rigid scrutiny, and it was only after they were convinced of its being no human invention, but the work of a merciful God, that they fully approved and earnestly recommended it to the faithful. As mentioned above, the object of this devotion had already been revealed to St. Gertrude. It is to inflame the hearts of men with the love of Jesus, to incite us to imitate His Most Sacred Heart, as the model of all virtues, so as to make our hearts like unto His, and to procure from this fountain-head of life eternal, all the graces necessary for our salvation. This devotion, as is evident from what was said above, is nothing but the devotion which we owe to our divine Saviour Himself. In honoring the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we do not separate it from His sacred body, but honor it as His living Heart, united to His divine Person. We, therefore, honor our Saviour; but, in our devotion, fix our eyes on His Most Sacred Heart, because it reminds us of all His virtues, of all that He suffered and did for us, and because it shows us more clearly His infinite love for us. Hence, too, it is best fitted to touch our hearts, to excite in us feelings of love and gratitude, and to move us to careful observance of whatever our Lord demands of us. "This Blessed Heart," says St. Bernard, "is represented wounded by a lance, to recall

to our minds, by the sight of the visible wound, the invisible wound of His love; for, as among men, according to the words of Christ, a good man brings forth good fruit from the good treasure of his heart, so we should consider the Heart of Jesus as the throne of His love, as the seat of all holy desires and inclinations, as the source of all virtue, as the treasury of every grace, as the means of our salvation and the model of all hearts." In this sense, also, we may and we should say that this devotion is most holy, most ancient, most useful, most powerful.

I. This devotion is most holy, because by it we honor in Christ, our Lord, the holiest desires and sentiments of His Sacred Heart; desires and sentiments by which He has sanctified His Church, infinitely glorified His Father, and made Himself the model of the sublimest sanctity for men. These emotions filled the Sacred Heart of Jesus from the very moment of its conception and throughout His entire life, fill it now in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist on earth, and will fill it forever amid the glories of heaven, and which, through the mediation of the Redemption, will sanctify all the elect of the Lord forever.

II. It is the most ancient devotion in the Church, because she has at all times acknowledged, that all of us owe our salvation, and she herself owes her foundation to the great goodness of the Divine Heart of Jesus. (Tit. ii). It was this goodness which caused our merciful Redeemer to offer Himself as a propitiatory sacrifice, and to resolve, at His very entrance into the world, to redeem us by His death; by which first offering of His Sacred Heart, He had, according to the testimony of St. Paul, already accomplished our redemption.

III. It is the most useful devotion; because Holy Writ everywhere admonishes us to renew our hearts by a true reformation of our lives, to render them contrite by a true penance, to inflame them with the fire of divine love, to sanctify them by keeping the commandments of God, to nourish them by the increasing contemplation of the divine law, to raise them by withdrawing from the pleasures of the world, and to adorn them with all virtues by zeal for everything good; for which purpose the Scriptures often promise us a new heart. (Ezech. xxxvi.) But the new heart must resemble the Most Sacred Heart of Him, in whose footsteps we must walk, in order to please God. This is no other than the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which God has proposed to us as our model and in which the Heavenly Father is well pleased. And nothing can be more proper to obtain this conformity, than our devotion to it, our fervent love and zealous imitation of those virtues, which its mere sight so lovingly and powerfully teaches.

IV. It is the most powerful devotion, because it leads us to the fountain of life, whence we may always draw innumerable graces, by means of the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. In the latter, this Heart is substantially present, and hence, too, this sacrament so strongly and lovingly attracts all those hearts that truly love Jesus. Surely our hearts will soon be pure, meek, humble, compassionate, full of love to God, in a word, like unto the Heart of Jesus, if we thus ever devoutly contemplate His Divine Heart, honor it, love it, and frequently unite ourselves to it in Holy Communion. The Divine Heart, will, by its grace, impress on our hearts a copy of all its own perfections, and fill us with all the treasures of heaven.

V. It is a devotion most pleasing to Christ, our Lord; for, it is the devotion of His Heart. Can anything be more dear, more pleasing to His Heart, than love of the same Heart, especially, as by it, being united with Christ, we serve God in spirit and in truth?

VI. It is, on this account, a devotion leading to perfection; for it tends directly to unite us in the closest manner with Jesus Christ, our Head, through His Most Sacred Heart. It causes us to live by His Spirit, and to become one with Him, to have, as it were, but one heart and one soul with Jesus, and, by the influence of His grace, to become entirely absorbed in Him, so that He becomes to our spiritual life what the heart is to the corporal life of man.

VII. It is finally the sweetest of all devotions; for, can there be a more tender and attractive object of our heartfelt love than this Divine Heart? Can there be any other object more apt, by its mere sight, to move our hearts to the practice of every virtue, and this the more efficaciously, as this Heart of our Redeemer is the source of all power and grace, without which we are helpless, but, with which we can do all things?

In recommending to us this holy devotion, the Church has no other intention than to inflame our hearts with the love of Jesus, and powerfully to incite us to imitate His virtues.

At different periods, God gives His Church different means to awaken the zeal of her children. At the present time when our love of God has grown so cold, the Church offers to our view the Divine Heart of our Redeemer, which has loved us with an infinite love. Her intention in this is to arouse us from our lethargy by the sight of this touching object, to move us to true penance, to excite us to imitate our Saviour, and render ourselves worthy of His graces, according to the express words of Christ speaking to His servant, the Bd. Margaret Mary. "I wish," said He, "that this touching image of my love should be

publicly presented to men, that the sight of it may move their hardened hearts, and inflame them with my love."

But since the Divine Heart is really present in the Holy Eucharist, and since the excessive love of the Divine Heart appears in the most wonderful manner in this sacrament, the devotion to the Sacred Heart naturally instils into our hearts a particular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament; so that both devotions, being closely allied, aid and strengthen each other.

Pope Innocent XII., in 1729, sanctioned this devotion by a grant of Indulgences to the confraternity of the Sacred Heart; though it was reserved for Pius VI. to crown it with victory over all its assailants, in 1794. Clement XIII. established the annual festival of the Sacred Heart, with a special mass and office. Under him the confraternity of the Sacred Heart was established at Rome. It was erected into an Arch-confraternity by Pius VII., and was enriched with many Indulgences by him and by Leo XII. In our own time, under the Pontificate of Pius IX., this devotion, united with the Apostleship of Prayer, has increased in a wonderful way. It has attracted millions of faithful to this fountain of grace, purifying and sanctifying their lives, by the influence of a continually renewed good intention, united with the intentions and affections of the Sacred Heart.

Finally, following the invitation of the Head of the Church, almost all of the dioceses of the Catholic world have, in a most solemn and special manner, dedicated themselves to the Sacred Heart.

The Holy Church, abandoned and forsaken by all earthly powers, not protected by a single one, but rather persecuted on all sides, is taking refuge in that Heart and wound from which she started, which is her birthplace and native element; and where she hopes to find protection, consolation and salvation. And no doubt if all the faithful would practise this devotion to the Sacred Heart, in spirit and in truth, as explained above, no power of the world would be able to harm them.

Let us then listen to the voice of the Lord and approach the throne of mercy with confidence. All will find in this most loving Heart reconciliation, protection, consolation and sanctification, and therefore a pledge of their salvation. By following the Saviour through love, by imitating His virtues, by living in His Heart, as in a secure asylum, and by dying on it, faithful to the end in our love for our Saviour, we shall enjoy the eternal love of this Divine Heart in Heaven.

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